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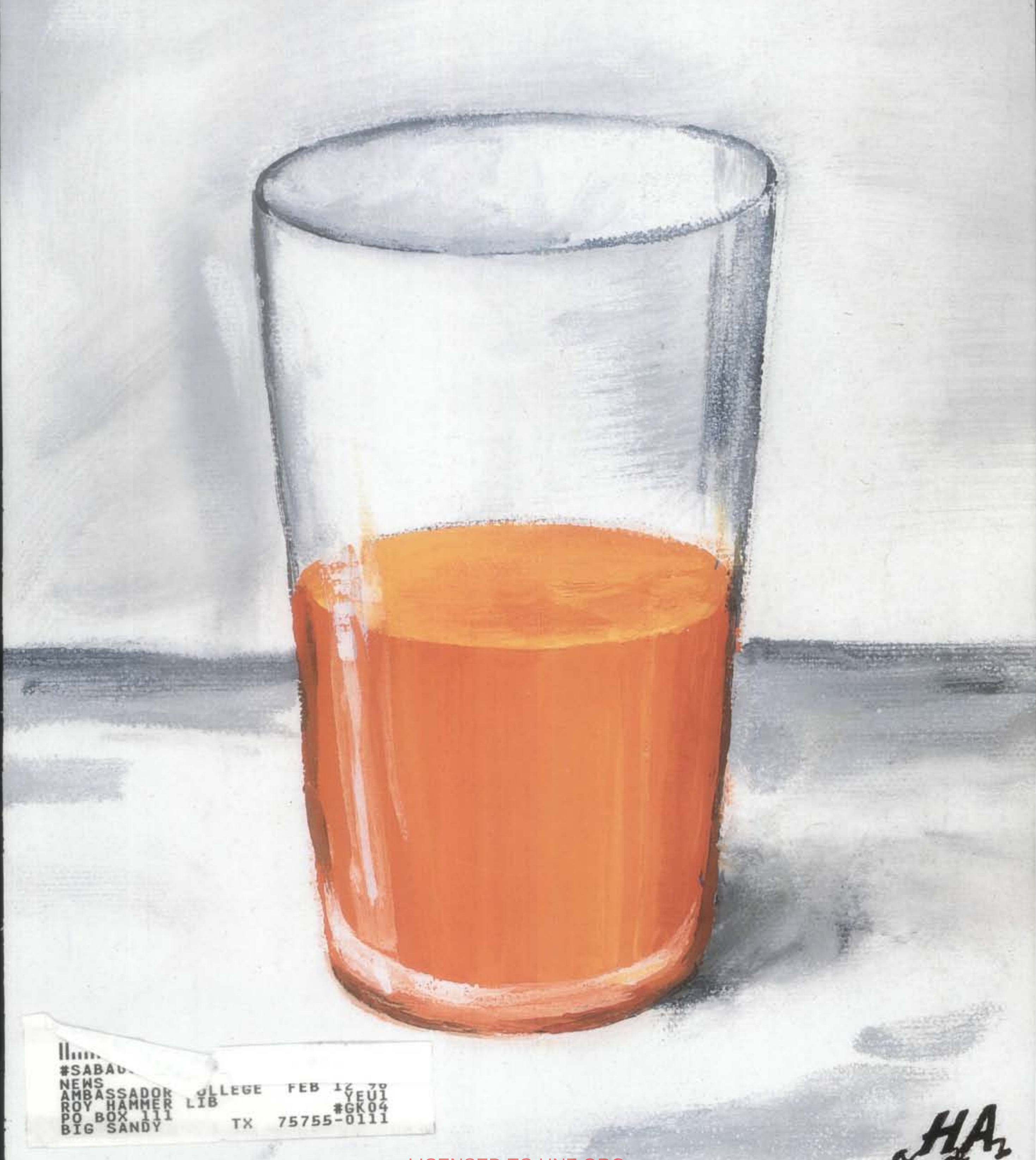

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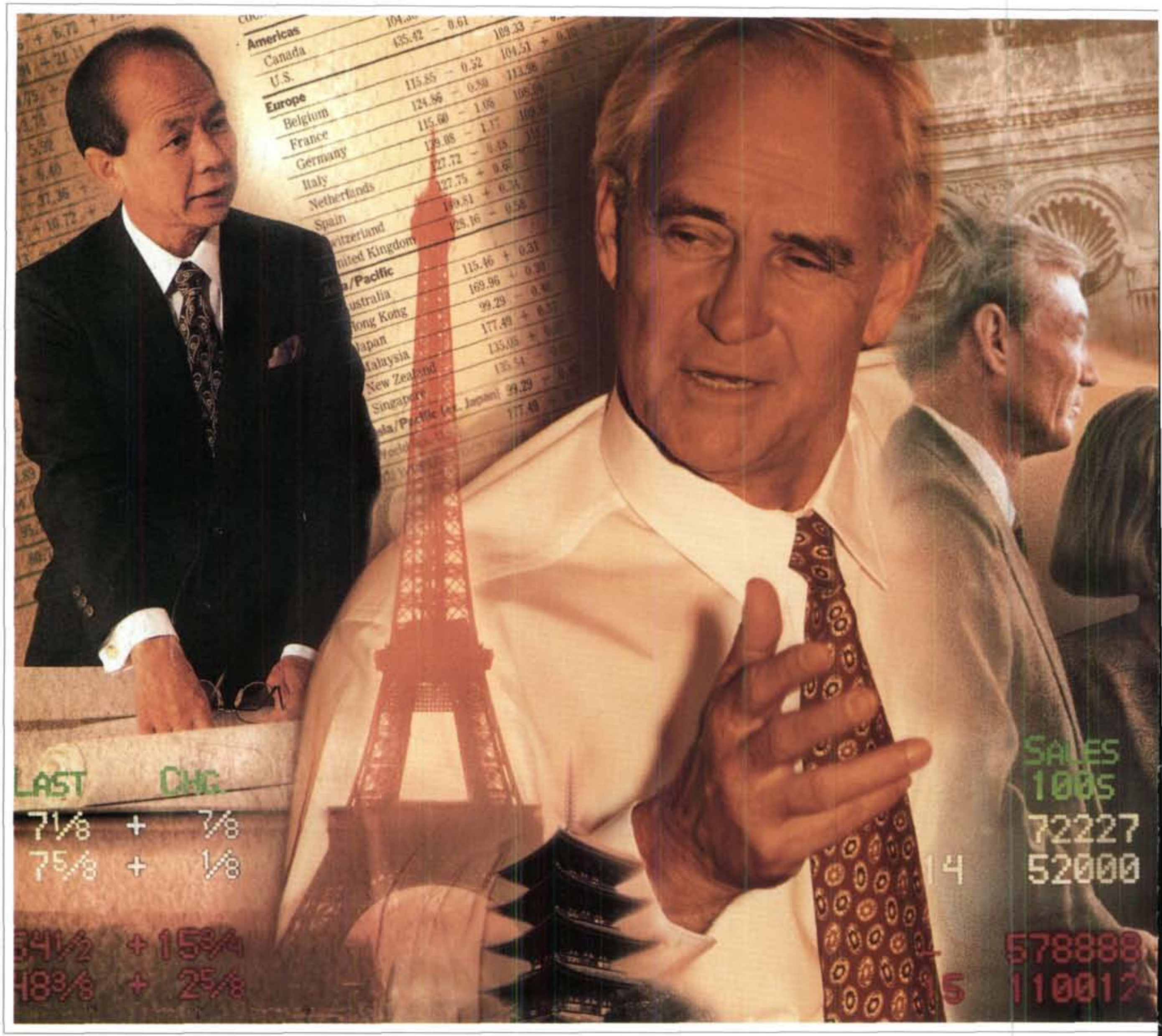
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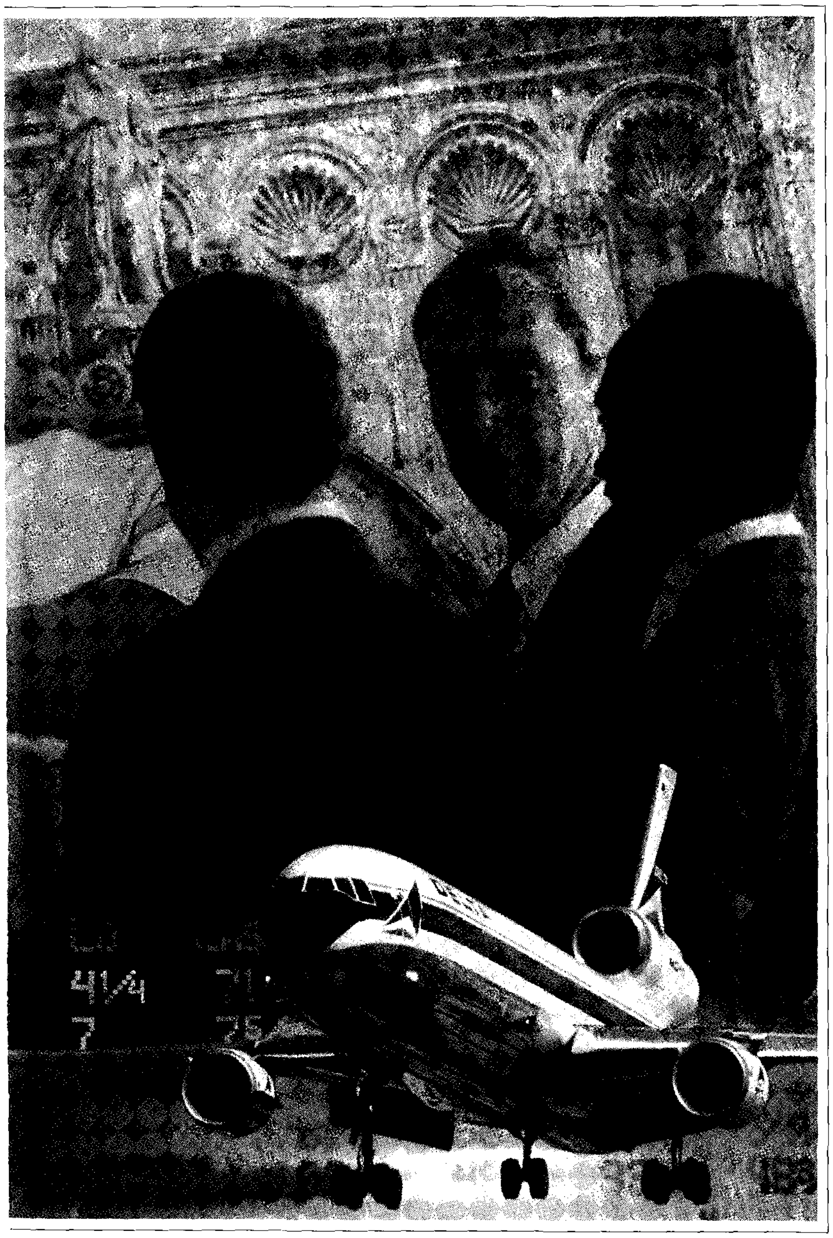

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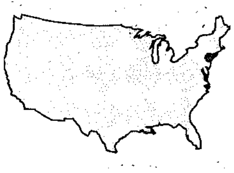

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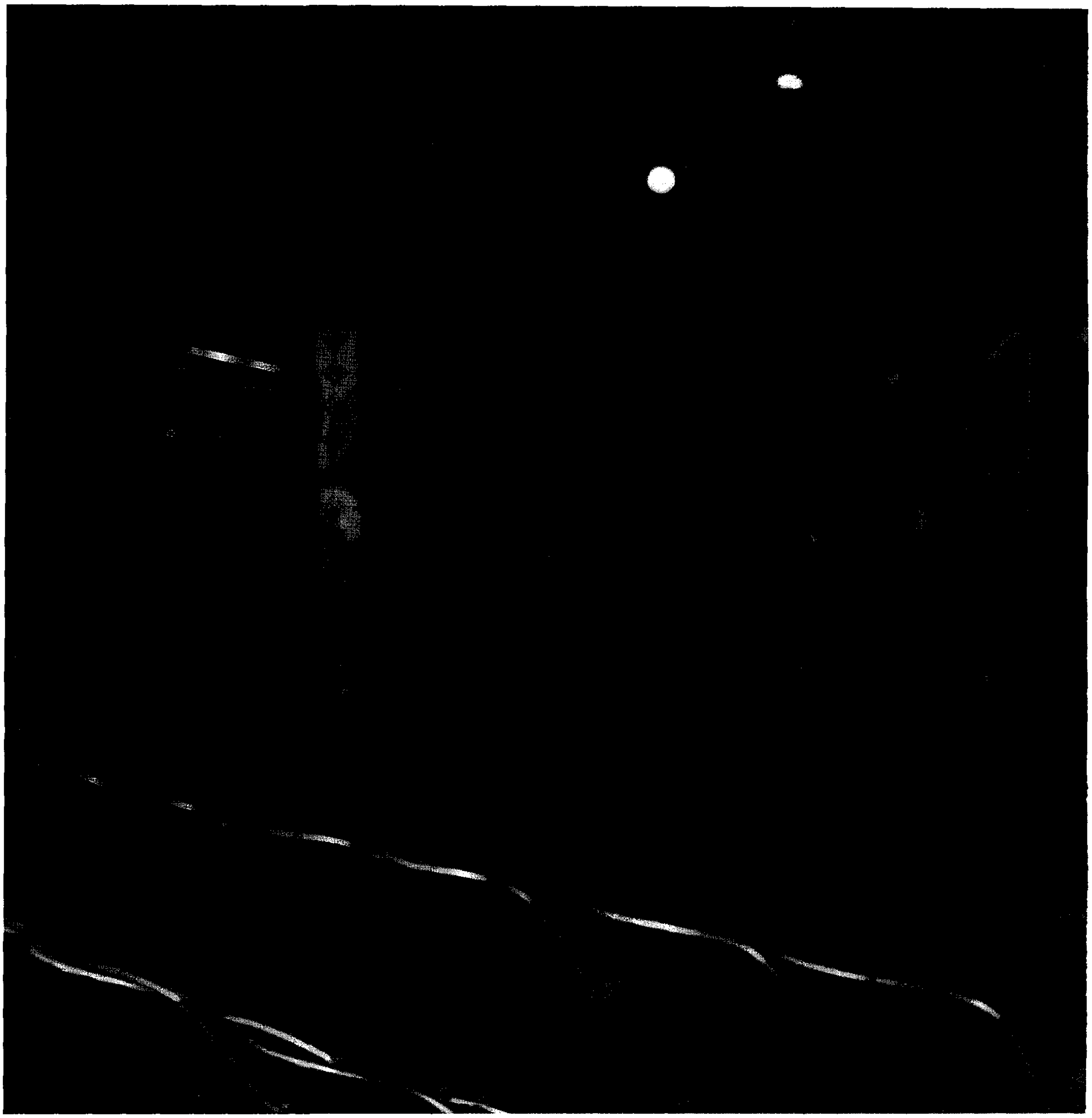

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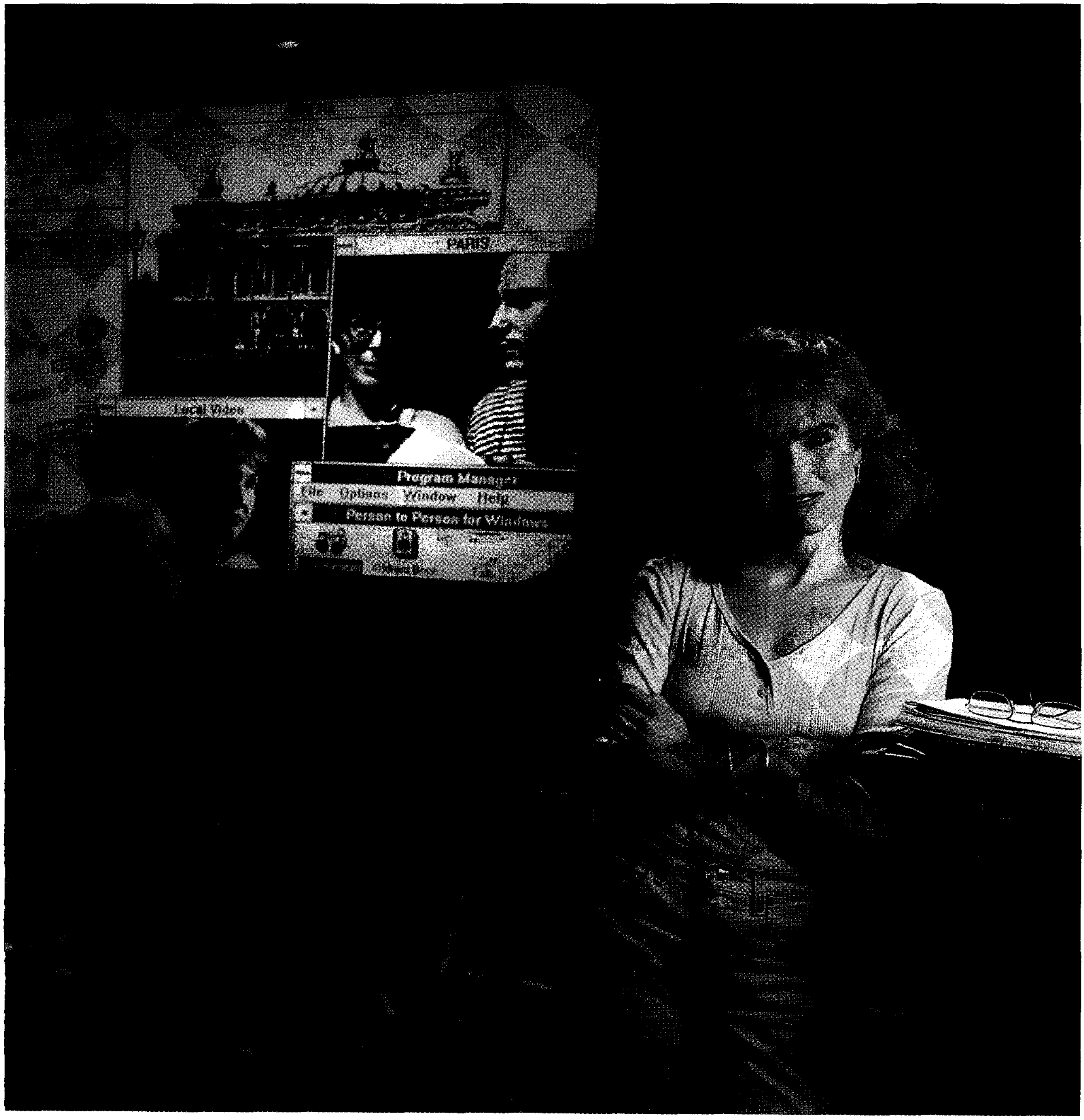
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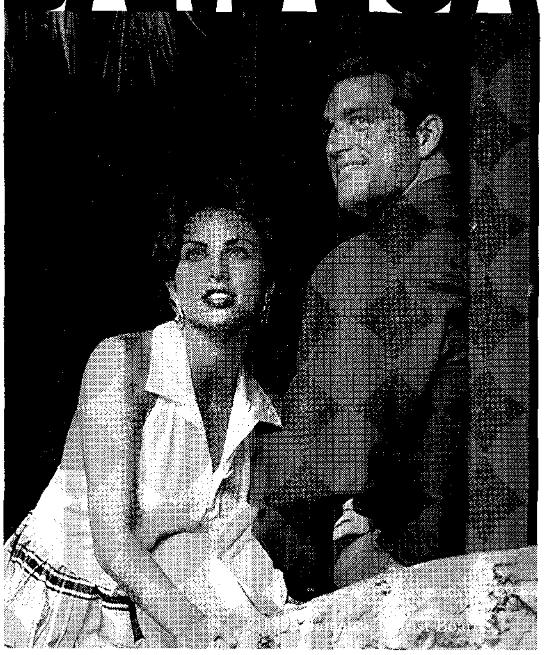

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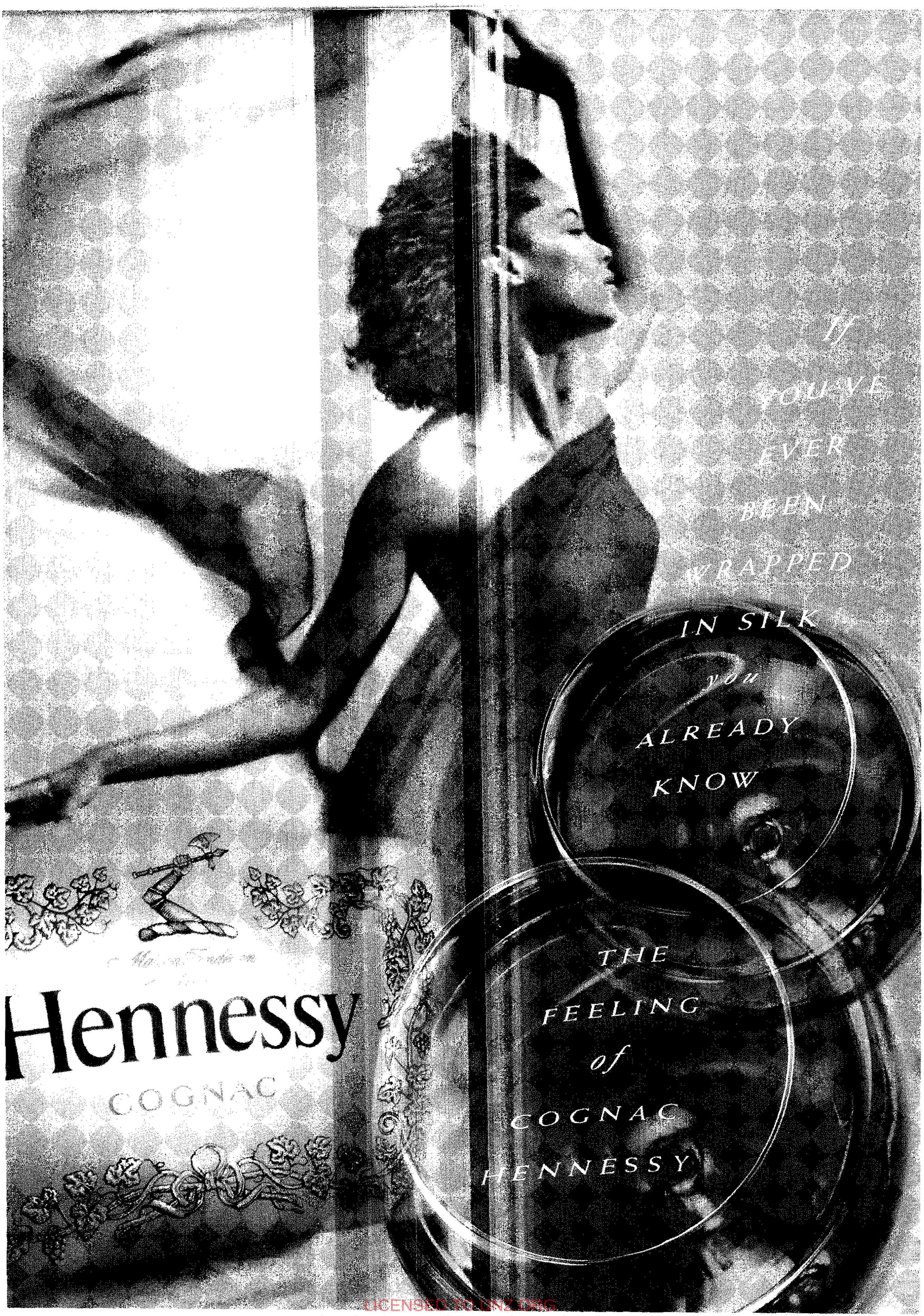
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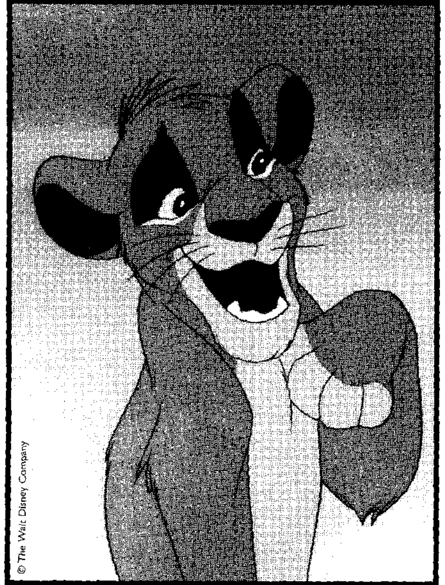

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INFAMOUS VICTORY

What Yeltsin loses by winning his war in Chechnya.

WHAT a sad spectacle, the "triumph" in Grozny. As the Russian Army seized the Chechen Presidential palace, Boris Yeltsin declared the war "effectively over." Thousands are dead in the Caucasus, the Army is demoralized, the democrats have gone into fierce opposition, and the Russian President is counting, it seems, on the autocrat's ability to control the writing of history. The Clinton Administration, which withheld any public criticism of the slaughter until it was too late, shows a weird eagerness to forget. But the Russian people, to say nothing of the Chechens, will not.

Political cruelty is sometimes so profound that it becomes nearly unbearable to assign ultimate blame. Such was the tradition in autocratic, information-free Russia: "If only they would tell the Czar!" "Stalin didn't know." "Gorbachev was abroad." But now, with Russian television showing dogs hungrily circling the corpses in Grozny, with *Izvestia* fearlessly publishing headlines like "The Threat of a Police State in Russia," the Czar cannot escape his handiwork. Partly thanks to Yeltsin's own efforts, Russian society has changed too much to return to blindness. Yeltsin is certainly surrounded now by men of dark intent, but it was he who put them there; he is responsible not only for compounding the carnage in Chechnya but also for betraying his grand ambition to help Russia become, at last, a normal country. Yeltsin may survive in office; he may even win the 1996 Presidential election (if he bothers to hold it). But he has exhausted himself as a symbol of courage and democratic reform.

For more than a year now, Yeltsin's behavior has been reminiscent of his old antagonist's final year in office. Holding fast to a faith in Soviet power, Mikhail Gorbachev rejected nearly all of his reformist advisers in late 1990 and listened only to the counsel of his most reactionary ministers. It was they—the leaders of the military, the police, the K.G.B.—who feigned the greatest loyalty, telling Gorbachev that the liberals would soon destroy him, and, in fact, were planning demonstrations that would lead to the storming of the Kremlin with "hooks and ladders." Gorbachev acceded to al-

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most every one of the reactionaries' demands. He rejected major economic reform. He took to calling the reformers the "so-called democrats." He allowed the head of the K.G.B. to tap the telephone of Aleksandr Yakovlev, a liberal who had once been his closest conspirator in perestroika. He let the K.G.B. attack the Lithuanians. Finally, the loyal reactionaries turned against him, in the coup of August, 1991, only to be defeated by their own ineptitude, and by Yeltsin.

Like Gorbachev before him, Yeltsin has embraced a self-defeating notion of loyalty. Inside the Kremlin, criticism and debate are again treated as betrayal. Yeltsin, who once complained so righteously about the taps on his phones under Gorbachev, now presides over a regime in which suspicion is the dominant mood. Visit a Presidential adviser at the Kremlin now and he is likely to pull from his desk drawer a sign saying, "This conversation is not confidential." Is bugged, in other words. The conversation will then proceed on paper. A couple of weeks ago in Moscow, a political correspondent for the newspaper *Sevodnya*, Sergei Parkhomenko, said, "For the past year, no one has been willing to talk on the record. They are all terrified."

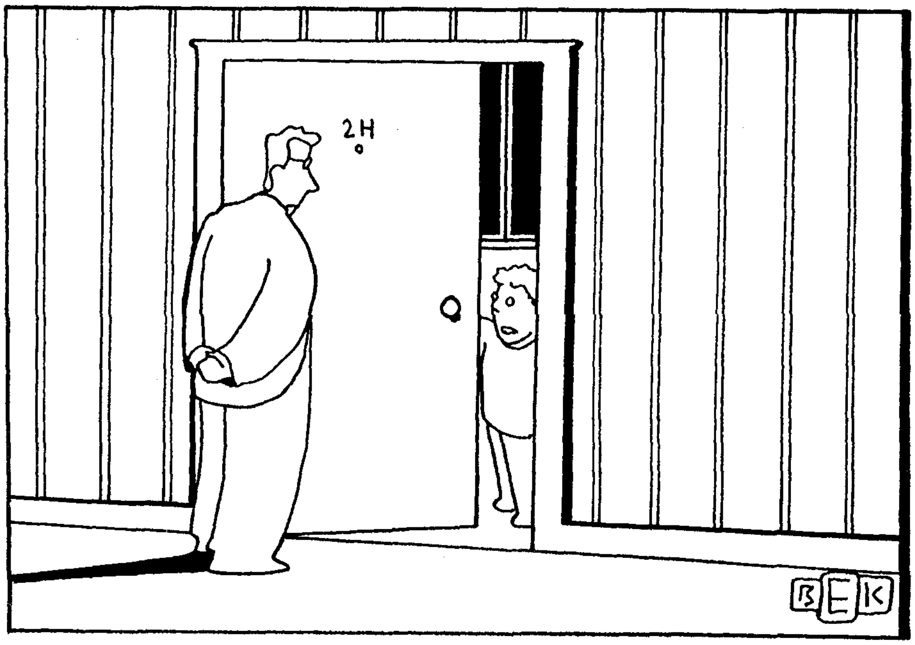
The roots of the Chechen war and the current political crisis date from October, 1993, and the shelling of the Russian parliament. With the reluctant backing of human-rights warriors like Yelena Bonner and Sergei Kovalyov, a former political prisoner, Yeltsin had a chance then to turn deadlock and tragedy into a beginning. Instead, he remained aloof through the December parliamentary-election campaign, and hard-line nationalists and Communists scored well all across Russia. Ever since, the President's response has been to move farther and farther toward authoritarianism—and deeper and deeper into seclusion. His foreign policy is increasingly hostile toward the West. He presides over a government riddled with corrupt ministers and bureaucrats, and he continues to neglect the creation of an effective judicial branch of government. He rarely appears in public or on television, and there is every reason to believe that he is rarely presentable enough to do so. He has frequently embarrassed the country with his drinking—not least when he failed to get off his plane at Shannon Airport last September to meet with the Irish leadership assembled out on the runway.

The Russian government has faced a legitimate crisis in Chechnya since 1991, when the leadership there declared independence. But Moscow chose a reckless course, all the while imagining that it could show the iron fist at very little cost. The hapless Defense Minister, Pavel Grachev, boasted that the operation would take a couple of hours. What is more, in most Russian eyes, Chechens are the devil incarnate, the very definition of the modern mobster—an image the Kremlin thought it could exploit. The region truly is a center for organized crime: arms are sold everywhere; half the foreign cars stolen in Russia seem to end up in Grozny. The Chechen mobsters who have made fortunes in organized crime are sometimes called "the air people," as if their lucre were raining down on them. The Chechen government, which is interlarded with mafiosi, has paid barely a kopeck in taxes to the federal treasury for three years. Clearly, the men around Yeltsin thought there would be no sympathy for a breakaway republic—especially not one that embodied the lawlessness of post-Soviet daily life.

At first, Moscow tried to infiltrate the Chechen leadership and bring it down from within; then it funded surrogate opposition leaders. These plots failed; the war began, as if from nowhere. Yeltsin and his advisers, when they have bothered to appear in public at all, have lied about the extent—and the incompetence—of the bombardments. In just over a month of fighting, at least a thousand Russian troops have died; the most reliable estimates of Chechen fighters and civilians killed is five thousand. Pro-democracy liberals, with Bonner and Kovalyov in the forefront, can no longer find excuses for Yeltsin. One of the leading liberals in the parliament, Boris Zolotukhin, recently told a visitor, "No one doubts that there was a legitimate political interest at stake in Chechnya. But what is unforgivable is the stupidity of it all. Why, for example, did Yeltsin not try an economic embargo? How could he have been so brutal?"

Democracy is no safeguard against brutality—or against political stupidity, for that matter. But without a democratic foundation, without the rule of law, there is little to check the whim of the autocrat and the intrigue of his circle. At least in modern Russia, the Czar can no longer escape blame. A free press has made sure of that. It is only in Washington that people still wonder, "Did the Czar know?"

—DAVID REMNICK



"I see, your name is Dad. And what family did you say you're with?"

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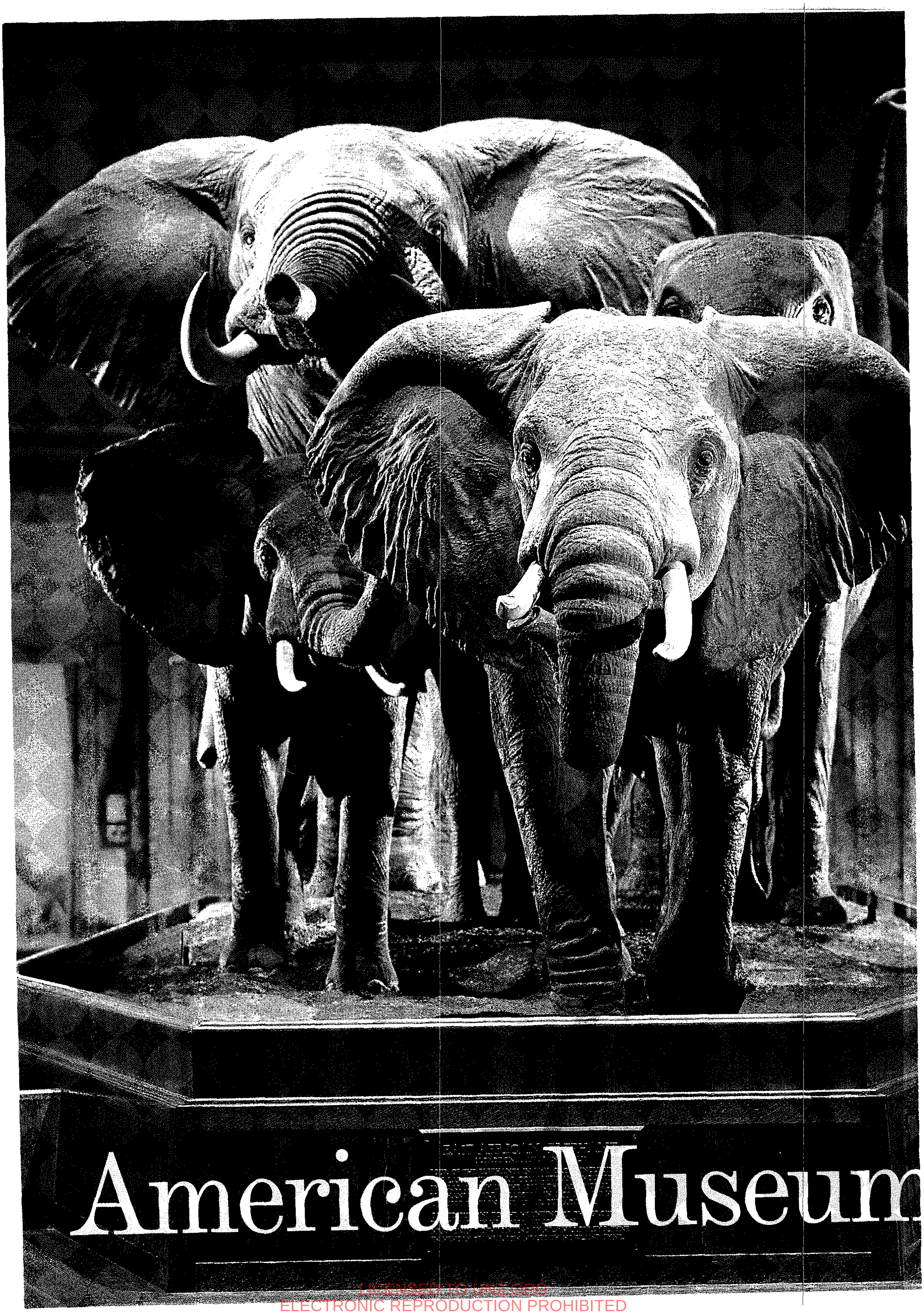

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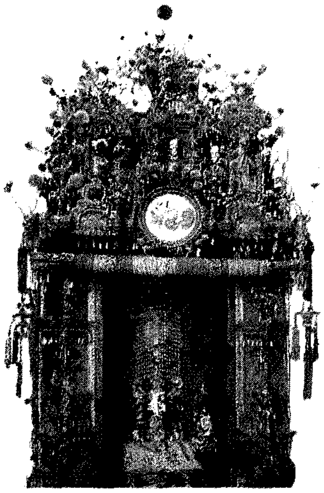

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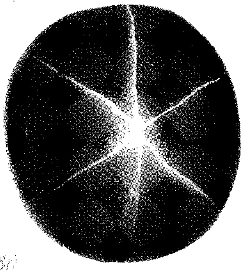

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Jane Levere, THE BOSTON GLOBE
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IN THE MAIL

WHO'S THE VICTIM?

Dissenting voices answer Arlene Croce's critique of victim art.

The major point of Arlene Croce's controversial article ("Discussing the Undiscussable," December 26, 1994/January 2, 1995) is that what she calls "victim art"—namely, unmodulated accounts of suffering and death—has bamboozled critics and intimidated audiences. This conclusion seems to me virtually unassailable.

Nonetheless, it was damaging for Ms. Croce to build an aesthetic theory on a work she hadn't seen. Ms. Croce didn't attend Bill T. Jones's AIDS-driven "Still/Here," she says, because she "can't review someone I feel sorry for or hopeless about." Her hesitancy about letting humane considerations cloud her critical judgment reflects a scrupulous professionalism rather than an insensitive heart, but to discuss the Jones piece anyway, on the basis of publicity and previous work, is tactically unsound. Not only does it confirm the suspicion that most critics write about things they know nothing of but criticizing a sick gay black man invites a political response to what is actually an impassioned and heartfelt contribution to aesthetics. Thus she is being embraced by the morally vigilant and assailed by the politically correct.

But Ms. Croce's article is not about sides. It is an effort to rescue criticism from such simplistic thinking. Instead of saying that artists should ignore death and dying, she is asking that they invest these issues with something other than appeals to sympathy or guilt. She is suggesting that criticism soaked in the sauces of militancy is the stew of second-rate minds, that group resentments earn not artistic but victim status, that reality without artistic transcendence turns us all into voyeurs, that the visionary gleam rather than any narcissistic glitter is what redeems American art. I hope in future Arlene Croce will find nothing human alien to her critical sensibilities. I also hope she receives appropriate recognition for pursuing the unpredictable truth into the mean side streets where ideologists lurk.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN
American Repertory Theatre
Cambridge, Mass.

To write so contemptuously about work one has not seen is an awesome flaunting of privilege—a testimony to the reality that there is no marginalized group or individual powerful enough to silence or suppress reactionary voices. Ms. Croce's article is not courageous or daring, precisely because it merely mirrors the ruling political mood of our time. No one is really taken in by her assuming the mantle of the "oppressed" concerned critic who cares for art. Clearly, she's willing to exploit her power as a critic to "win" whatever personal war she has chosen to wage against Bill T. Jones. Disclaimers like "Jones's personal story does not concern me" do little to deflect her from this agenda. She is obviously obsessed with his story. Yet neither her hatred of Mr. Jones, embedded in her vicious dismissal of his work, nor her strategic linking of that with an attack on "victim art" merits attention or prolonged discussion. Individuals who are not critics of dance or any other art have already stated, again and again, every opinion on art and culture that Ms. Croce lays claim to. The publication of this piece alarms and threatens because it exposes the extent to which right-wing values, particularly censorship—the will to suppress dissenting voices, to limit artistic freedom and critical vision—are gaining cultural momentum. It is this dangerous trend that warrants critical vigilance and should provoke progressive resistance.

Bell Hooks
New York City

For reasons that Ms. Croce forthrightly points out, we find a great deal of the art of our time meritorious for very peripheral reasons indeed. Her reference to the Mapplethorpe exhibit here in Cincinnati was, in my opinion, quite to the point. Even though Mapplethorpe's work is of a very high standard, it was sold to the public as a victim of censorship, and to this day most people in this city think of the exhibit as a symbol of our provincialism rather than as a subject of legitimate controversy or as photography of a high quality.

Kendrick Bell
Cincinnati, Ohio

I have a personal grudge to settle in this debate, having been stung by Ms. Croce's dismissal of "these AIDS epics" in her list of bad art contaminated by a "mass-production sensibility." I assume that she refers to "Angels in America": in spite of my mass-production sensibility, I know when I'm being dissed.

In the last decade, the world has witnessed some of the most appalling atrocities in history: plague, famine, battle, indifference, and ignorance are carrying off legions of people; barbarians are dismantling the federal government. Arlene Croce, meanwhile, gets seriously freaked out that Bill T. Jones is using videotapes of terminally ill people in his dance pieces, because this means she can't criticize the work. Oy, such problems she has! If an artist paints a bad painting in his own blood and then bleeds to death, one is certainly free to write, "I am sorry this man bled to death, but he didn't make a good painting." It's unlikely that hordes of victims will attack one for doing so, since victims (by which Ms. Croce means politically engaged progressive people) generally have better things to do with their time.

In the nineteenth century, reactionary critics, residents of the same cobwebbed empyrean that Arlene Croce now occupies in magisterial semi-isolation, lamented the vulgarity and the politics of contemporary artists; the same artists who now make Ms. Croce swoon over their Romantic reticence and spirituality were once berated by critics for being insufficiently reticent and not as spiritual as the artists of, say, the Middle Ages. These are reactionary times: Gingrich's clarion call is emboldening his kindred everywhere, and a mighty braying is heard in the land. Ms. Croce may have no truck with the "righteous," but she's right at home with the Right.

Ms. Croce informs us that the choreographer and playwright David Gordon's having escaped the bog of "sixties permissiveness" that swallowed Bill T. Jones is not due to a "presumed cultural advantage that Jews have over blacks"; I can't tell whether she's guilty here of racism or of mean-spirited provocation or merely of inept phrasing. Might I suggest, indulging in some victim paranoia, that David Gordon's play (which I hear is wonderful) is invoked in her attack because it sets up an opposition lurking beneath Ms. Croce's politics of anti-political art? Ms. Croce tells us that Mr. Gordon's piece is called "The Family Business" and that it's by Mr. Gordon and Ain, his son. Mr. Jones, with no son and no family business but only a dead and, according to Ms. Croce, morbidly fetishized male partner, is trapped by "charisma" and "narcissism," of which gay men are invariably accused—charges with which the Right has stigmatized identity politics and liberation movements since the coming of Christopher Lasch. Ms. Croce finds Mr. Jones guilty of over-responding to multiculturalist and community politics and, at the same time, of narcissism, which is a neat trick.

The people Ms. Croce assaults for milking their victim status are in fact fighting for freedom, equality, survival; in the crazy rhetoric of the Right, struggle and anger are transmogrified into irresponsible slacking and whining. One of the chief gestures of good art about oppression is to question and refuse victim status, to exhort people toward agency and action. I've seen a lot of Mr. Jones's work, and I've seen no self-pity there. His work sells out at BAM because people love it; it moves and infuriates and excites them, and this, I think, makes Arlene Croce jealous, or makes her, as a reactionary, feel threatened. Artists have always sought to push at the boundary between art and life, and every theatre artist in history has envied the origins of theatre, which were, of course, in the church; and that envy has prompted every ambitious theatre artist to try to create not only illusion but life itself. Amid so much death, the impulse to make actual life may have grown stronger, and Bill T. Jones is acclaimed for being one of that impulse's bravest and most talented avatars. Against the ferocity and beauty and complexity of his work, Ms. Croce's angst and her inability to imagine a proper critical stance seem pretty pale. Bill T. Jones can make the claim "Still/Here." Of Ms. Croce's essay, only this can be said: she "Never/Arrived."

Tony Kushner
New York City

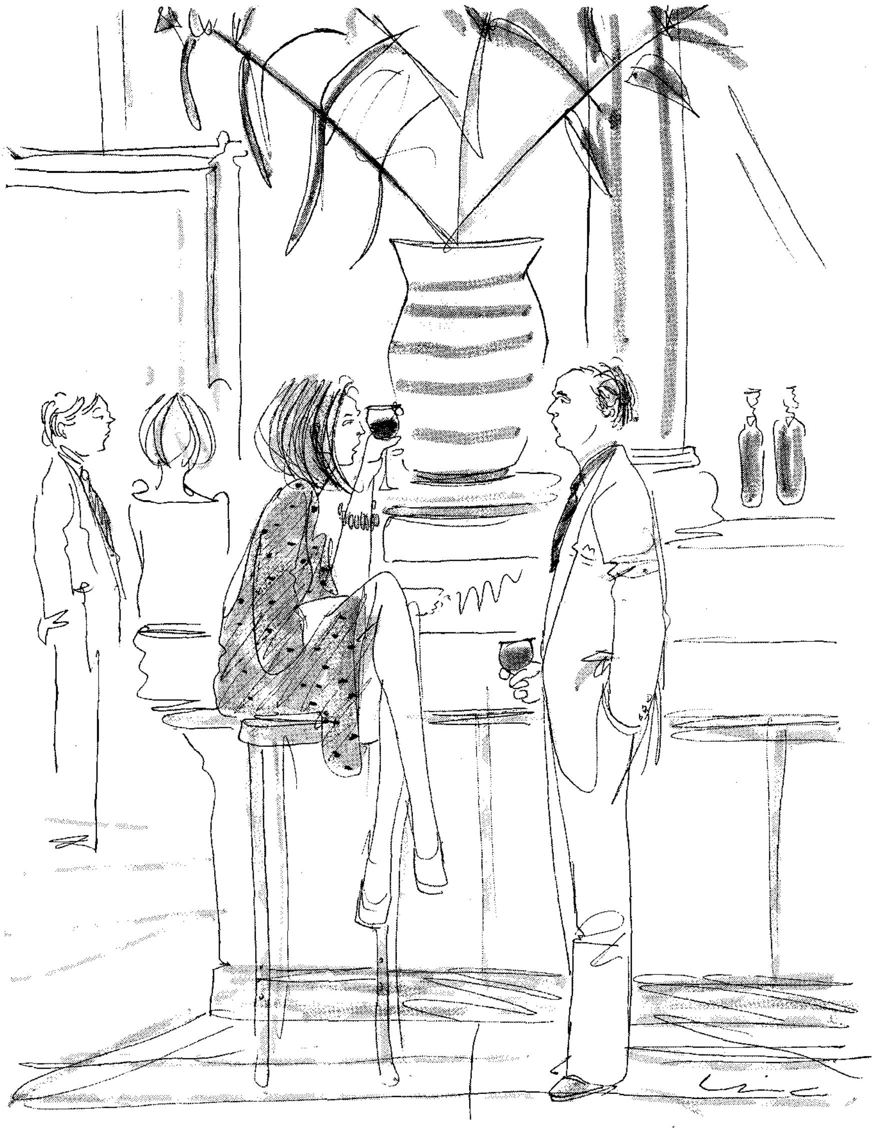
Since Ms. Croce chose not to see "Still/Here," as Bill T. Jones's publicist I find it necessary to correct the errors in her fictitious account before they are transformed into historical fact. Bill's piece was first and foremost a work of choreography, in which the dancing itself contained the message. The talking that Ms. Croce refers to was a part of the musical score. The show's cast members are professional, international-class dancers, members of Mr. Jones's own modern-dance troupe—not "sick people." Those who were part of Gretchen Bender's video installation had chosen to have their experiences transformed into art. They are not "victims" who would sell their stories on "A Current Affair." All works of art, no matter how abstracted the image ultimately becomes, are born from reality. Rather than a work about AIDS or about dying, "Still/Here" is a work about living, and its subjects are not "victims" but, rather, witty, smart, and feisty heroes who have chosen triumph over submission. This is not a matter of opinion but a fact that could be witnessed onstage.

Ellen Jacobs
New York City

No matter what out Arlene Croce gives herself, there is no way I can take her piece on Bill T. Jones's "Still/Here" seriously. She has not seen it. Her statement that "of course no one goes to 'Still/Here' for the dancing" is ridiculous. How does she know? The fact is that "Still/Here" is indeed a dance work. I do not think I have ever seen a critic discredit herself as Ms. Croce has done in this instance, by not seeing the work at all.

Harvey Lichtenstein
Brooklyn Academy of Music
Brooklyn, New York

Arlene Croce's essay goes to the crux of the intellectual swindle that has consigned aesthetic standards in the arts to the sidelines—if not, indeed, to oblivion—



"I wish I had known you when you had money."

while pressing the ideology of victimhood into service as the only permissible basis on which works of art are to be experienced and judged.

This swindle is at once a manifestation of philistine incomprehension of the nature of art and a blatant attempt to impose political standards on the creation of art. It now represents what Ms. Croce accurately calls "an officialdom, a fortress of victim art."

As the response to Ms. Croce's essay has already demonstrated, critics who challenge this officialdom are in for some rough treatment. It needs to be understood, then, that the ritualistic charges of racism, sexism, homophobia, and the like do not issue from any serious attempt to illuminate the problems of art and culture in our tragically divided society, but are designed to silence dissent from a prevailing political orthodoxy. In this respect, such charges have proved to be largely successful as far as the mainstream press is concerned.

This, I daresay, is the reason Ms. Croce's essay has caused such an uproar. It has come from a wholly unexpected quarter—the liberal *New Yorker*—and from this journal's premier critic of the arts. It has dared to tell the truth about the artistic blight that this political orthodoxy has brought us, and to awaken the magazine's liberal readers to the consequences of their folly in embracing it. And in this endeavor, I believe, Ms. Croce's essay has brilliantly succeeded. Overnight, it has altered the terms of the debate, and placed the cultural Left on the defensive. Like any other officialdom, the "fortress of victim art" will no doubt continue to lumber on, enforcing false standards and supporting feeble creations, but its power to intimidate and coerce will now be much diminished.

HILTON KRAMER
The New Criterion
New York City

The storm of outrage that has greeted Ms. Croce's essay is a sure sign that the nerve she touched was in an already tender condition. Her declaration of refusal to be manipulated by works intended only to exploit the victimhood and sickness of their creators and performers seems to have stirred what has to be the bad conscience of a good number of her fellow-critics. Who, for instance, can with a steady mind find aesthetic merit in the performance of a man carving up the flesh of another man onstage and then gesturing with a bloody towel toward the audience? The answer is: in truth, no one. Honest critical response, and not in the field of art alone, has long since given way before the self-congratulatory camaraderie of jeering at ordinary decency.

Still, Ms. Croce herself is not quite off the hook. She tells us that when she served on a National Endowment for the Arts panel in the late seventies, she favored the man whose performance she will not now even attend, because he was someone not interested in playing the role of a "respectable" black choreographer. By the late seventies things were already pretty bad. She should by then have known where this would almost inevitably lead.

MIDGE DECTER
New York City

As an independent filmmaker with no sociopolitical axe to grind, I, like Ms. Croce, have watched with mixed emotions during the past two decades as representatives of various ethnic and gender groups that have historically been denied a voice and a presence in the arts gradually took over many of the grant-giving panels and gave to their own, to further their own agendas. I don't begrudge anyone this; every dog should have his day, and the channels of patronage for the arts have never been fair, evenhanded, or rational.

But artists who wish to pursue their own visions always have the freedom and obligation to do so, no matter what the prevailing fashions of funding. And critics have the same freedom and obligation. Ms. Croce should boldly venture forth to see "Still/Here," review it according to her own lights and values, and give up her special pleading. To her credit, she has pounced on one of the most interesting aesthetic and moral issues that "Still/Here" raises, but she has denied us the insights she might have derived from actual experience of the work.

Robert Withers
New York City

A provocative piece like Arlene Croce's was long overdue at *The New Yorker*, which has a dismal record in the political-correctness debate. Hence one wishes "Discussing the Undiscussable" were stronger. While its courage is commendable, its generalizations are sometimes questionable, and its critique of "victimhood" is scarcely fresh. Nevertheless, it has successfully flushed from the shrubbery an angry herd of P.C. dinosaurs who believe that defending art and aesthetics is "neoconservative"—a dated epithet of ritual abuse employed only by the puerile.

I totally agree with Ms. Croce that Victorian sentimentalization of disease and death has become a mawkish substitute for artistic vision. The truly avant-garde artist would challenge the AIDS discourse, not yield to it. The current cant and sanctimony about homosexuality would disgust Oscar Wilde, that anti-philanthropic warrior for art. We need more of the decadent blasphemies of Baudelaire and Genet, and less of the coddling and bromides of Florence Nightingale and June Cleaver.

Whether Bill T. Jones's "Still/Here" is brilliant or banal, I cannot say, since I haven't seen it. Perhaps it belongs to the style of morbid exhibitionism of "late phase" art: typical, subliminally erotic works of the Hellenistic era, for example, were the "Dying Gaul" and the "Laocoön," with its serpent-strangled male hunks. Or perhaps Mr. Jones's production, like so much AIDS art, politicizes disease instead of approaching it, in the profound Romantic way, as a manifestation of omnipotent nature.

In any case, I must defend the milieu from which Mr. Jones and his late collaborator, Arnie Zane, emerged. Along with the linguist Deborah Tannen and the movie director Andrew Bergman, we were produced by the State University of New York at Binghamton when it was in sixties cultural ferment. I am a proud disciple of what Ms. Croce rejects as "Warholism," which melted the lines between high and low culture, artist and audience, art and life.

If the critic now feels dispensable, it is because cultural commentary, after Norman Mailer and Marshall McLuhan, evolved into something more personal, improvisatory, and interdisciplinary. In the sixties, dance escaped the theatre and revolutionized the world. The "bravura individualism" that Ms. Croce last sees in Schumann is in fact spectacularly alive and well in the dazzling superstars of modern popular music.

Camille Paglia
University of the Arts
Philadelphia, Pa.

As a participant in one of Bill T. Jones's survival workshops for "Still/Here," I found it ironic that Ms. Croce describes the workshop participants as "dying people" who "aren't there" when in fact most of us are alive and still here.

Carol MacVey
Iowa City, Iowa

Mortality, ostracism, and oppression are old themes in art, at the heart of great works. Is it really so hard to find continuity between the ballet about the princess who was pricked by a poison spindle and the one about the urbanite who was infected by a syringe?

I had the peculiar fortune to be invited to see "Still/Here." I also have the peculiar fortune to be H.I.V.-positive. The latter fact did not prevent me from disliking "Still/Here." The music was tedious. The video, though interesting, did not mix well visually with the dancing. The dancing, however, was gorgeous, and during the opening minutes of the piece, before the electronics came on, when the stage contained nothing but dancers dancing, I wept.

It would help to do an occasional priority check. One wants to preserve aesthetic standards, yet aesthetic standards require the existence of artists, and our artists are dying at a devastating rate. In this no-win context, even art for art's sake has to address AIDS if it is to survive.

Rob Costin
New York City

Letters should be as brief as possible, and sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "In the Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They may be edited for length and clarity.

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

THE THEATRE

Soluble Fish

For twenty-seven years now, Richard Foreman has been writing, directing, and designing plays that make antic mischief with the lofty business of metaphysical inquiry. In his latest piece, "I've Got the Shakes"—at St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, the home base of his Ontological-Hysteric Theatre (through April 9)—the question "Is God here?" gets a reply that is typical of Foreman's unobliging hall of mirrors: "Who?"

Searching for enlightenment could give anybody the shakes, but in Foreman's universe they come in comic waves. Outfitted in a tiara and thigh-high spike-heeled boots (and played with remarkable composure by Jan Leslie Harding) is Madeline X, a somewhat bewildered teacher who hopes to enlighten a place called Ignorance. She heads a cast of oddballs that the March Hare would welcome at one of his tea parties. Foreman's ostentatiously ludicrous set looks like a Mardi Gras float cluttered with flea-market finds, and Lindsay W. Davis's costumes are outlandish, clownlike curiosities. What does it all mean? Clarity eludes Foreman's characters (and his audiences), but those who are hungry for answers can tide themselves over with sustenance from an unlikely Good Humor man: a rabbi with braided earlocks, who genially hands out fish-flavored Popsicles.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

After-Play—A comedy by Anne Meara, in which four old chums get together and spill some secrets. With Barbara Barrie and Rue McClanahan, among others. Previews through Jan. 29. Opens Jan. 31 at 7:30. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Beauty's Daughter—A one-woman show by the New York-born poet-actor Dael Orlandersmith. In previews. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

Body Shop—In Walter Marks' new musical, a Hollywood director visits a small-town strip joint and disrupts the lives of the club's employees. Previews through Jan. 28. Opens Jan. 29 at 3. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391.)

Henry VI—Theatre for a New Audience has divided (and edited) Shakespeare's trilogy into two parts, "The Contention" and "The Civil War," which will run in repertory; previews begin Jan. 27 and Feb. 3, respectively. Barry Kyle is the director. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

I Sent a Letter to My Love—A musical by Melissa Manchester and Jeffrey Sweet, based on the 1975 novel by Bernice Rubens. In previews. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

The Merchant of Venice—Ron Leibman is Shylock, in a production of Shakespeare's comedy directed by Barry Edelstein. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

Missing Persons—A new play by Craig Lucas, which grew out of his 1981 one-act of the same name. The cast includes Camryn Manheim, John Cameron Mitchell, and Mary Beth Peil. In previews. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 645-1242.)

The Molière Comedies—Brian Bedford stars in a double bill of works by the seventeenth-century French dramatist: "The Imaginary Cuckold" and "The School for Husbands." In previews. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

The Truth Teller—Circle Rep's second play of the season is this comedy by Joyce Carol Oates, which Gloria Muzio directed. Previews begin Jan. 26. (Circle Repertory Company, 159 Bleecker St. 239-6200.)

The Young Man from Atlanta—The Signature Theatre Company continues its season-long look at the plays of Horton Foote with this première, directed by Peter Masterson. Ralph Waite, Frances Foster, and Carlin Glynn are in the cast. Opens Jan. 27 at 8. (Kampo Cultural Center, 31 Bond St. 279-4200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Carmen—The Ridiculous Theatrical Company's version of the opera, with Everett Quinton in the title role. (Charles Ludlam Theatre, 1 Sheridan Sq. 691-2271.)

Cascando and **Eh Joe**—Two one-acts from the sixties by Samuel Beckett, with John Giorno in the latter. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. The double bill closes Jan. 29.)

Dylan Thomas: Return Journey and **The Truman Capote Talk Show**—Two one-man shows written by, and starring, the Welsh actor Bob Kingdom, and directed by Anthony Hopkins and Kevin Knight, respectively. The pieces are performed in repertory, and they're both laced with alcohol-enhanced humor. "Dylan Thomas" has the poetry, but "Truman Capote" is the chattier, more enjoyable affair. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 307-4100.)

The Emperor of the Moon—Aphra Behn's 1687 farce, about a learned man who is tricked into letting his daughter marry her lover, is in many ways typical of its era, but it has a harder (and surprisingly feminist) edge. Arden Party's production, directed by Karin Coonrod, is filled with annoying stylistic tics, but the cast is terrific. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. Closes Jan. 29. For reservations, call 969-0551.)

Grandma Sylvia's Funeral—The audience is part of the group of mourners in this comedy by Glenn Wein and Amy Lord Blumsack, which is set in a Jewish mortuary. (Playhouse on Vandam, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555.)

Grease!—The talented cast and the inventive production team show off the gleeful phonyness of Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey's musical with unembarrassed affection, and the result is a fun fake that's not trying to pass as the real thing. With Brooke Shields as Rizzo. (5/30/94) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

Hapgood—Tom Stoppard's 1988 play, which looks at the world of espionage through the lens of particle physics (or is it the other way around?), is a kind of dramatization of Heisenbergian uncertainty. The production is as mesmerizing as the play is bewildering; Stockard Channing, Josef Sommer, and David Strathairn, under the direction of Jack O'Brien, give confident, watchable performances that nevertheless don't bring you closer to the heart of the matter. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Have You Spoken to Any Jews Lately?—A comedy by Bruce Jay Friedman. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 6[illegible]3-9797. Closes Feb. 5.)

The House of Yes—SoHo Rep continues its "strong language, sexual situations, some violence" season with a play by Wendy MacLeod that deals with guns, twins, and incest. (46 Walker St. 334-0962. Closes Feb. 12.)

I've Got the Shakes—A new play written and directed by Richard Foreman and performed by his Ontological-Hysteric Theatre. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

Jean Cocteau Repertory—The company's unnuanced production of Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" runs in repertory with the American première of Italian playwright Eduardo De Filippo's "Napoli Milionaria" (1945), in a translation by Tori Haring-Smith. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Jelly Roll!—The snakily elegant Vernel Bagneris plays Jelly Roll Morton, in a wonderful show that traces the musician's transformation from New Orleans dandy into jazz legend. Morten Gunnar Larsen provides the thrilling piano accompaniment. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 265-1086.)

Jesus Christ Superstar—A brief engagement. (Paramount, Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Closes Jan. 29.)

Lesbian Bathhouse—A romantic comedy written and directed by Helen Eisenbach. (WOW Café, 59 E. 4th St. 460-8067. Closes Feb. 4.)

Living Proof—A junk-bond salesman just out of prison is seduced by his ex-wife's stepdaughter, shaking up a family that is already deeply dysfunctional. Gordon Rayfield's new comedy pits six characters against one another and deals near-lethal blows to suburbia, psychoanalysis, and Santa Fe. Although the acting is lively and the play serves the situation better than a sitcom might, it isn't quite as funny or as penetrating (especially at the resolution) as it needs to be. Presented by the Jewish Repertory Theatre. (Playhouse 91, 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

Love! Valour! Compassion!—Terrence McNally's beautifully written new drama has moved from Manhattan Theatre Club to Broadway. Anthony Heald replaces Stephen Spinella, but the rest of the cast, including Stephen Bogardus, John Glover, and the wonderful Nathan Lane, remains with the show. (11/14/94) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Nunsense 2: The Sequel—In the second coming of writer-director Dan Goggin's hit, five talented actresses take the veil and perform a revue to raise money for their convent. There's dancing, singing, boozing, and bingo, but none of it saves the show from the clutches of cliché. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.)

Old Times—The Independent Theatre Company's production of Harold Pinter's 1971 drama, about the sexually obsessed members of a triangle, has distracting sound effects and some uneven pacing under the direction of Dan Tedlie, but the capable actors—Michelle Gigante, Paul Todaro, and Julia Langham—manage to make the evening intense and wrenching. (House of Candles Theatre, 99 Stanton St. 353-3088. Closes Jan. 28.)

One Woman Shoe—In this new collaboration by the brother-sister team of David and Amy Sedaris, social-services applicants can't receive benefits until they put on a one-person show. Ms. Sedaris appears in the cast, too. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

Public Enemy—Kenneth Branagh's play is not much more than a moody knockabout, but it does offer an enticing conceit: a Belfast boy (Paul Ronan) works the night-club circuit as a Jimmy Cagney impersonator until the Troubles turn his gangster fantasies into real-life drama. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318.)

Show Boat—Harold Prince's bighearted production of the 1927 Jerome Kern-Oscar Hammerstein II musical is epic-size, full of life and full of vision. With John McMartin and Elaine Stritch as the patriarch and the matriarch of the floating theatre, and Lonette McKee, whose moving rendition of "Bill" is the show's most intimate moment. (10/17/94) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Slavs!—American playwrights are rarely as articulate as Tony Kushner is in this short play—part meditation, part intellectual vaudeville—about the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the apparent collapse of socialism. Lisa Peterson directed the lively production. (1/16/94) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 302-6989. Closes Jan. 29.)

The Sugar Bean Sisters—A play set in the Florida swamplands, by Nathan Sanders. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523. Closes Feb. 5.)

Sunset Boulevard—Glenn Close takes the monumental role of Norma Desmond and makes it something all her own, in Andrew Lloyd Webber's homage to Billy Wilder and Charles Brackett's 1950 fable of Hollywood corruption and dementia. Also with George Hearn, Alan Campbell, and Alice Ripley; directed by Trevor Nunn. (12/5/94) (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007.)

That's Life!—A seriocomic revue about the variety of Jewish life in America. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

Two Johns Kissin Leslie—A new show in a new home, by the improv troupe Chicago City Limits. (Chicago City Limits Theatre, First Ave. at 61st St. 888-5233.)

The Venetian Twins—An eighteenth-century Italian comedy by Carlo Goldoni, in an enjoyable jokey translation by Michael Feingold. The cast, headed by Arnie Burton and Clement Fowler, exploits a mishmash of comic techniques, including masks, slapstick, and audience participation. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes Jan. 28.)

Vita & Virginia—Eileen Atkins' Virginia Woolf shares the stage with Vanessa Redgrave's Vita Sackville-West in a play that Atkins put together from the letters that the women exchanged during their eighteen-year friendship. Redgrave is imposing and glamorous, but the brilliance of Woolf's writing stacks the theatrical deck in Atkins' favor, and she gives a quietly sensational, riveting performance. Zoe Caldwell directed. (12/12/94) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

You Should Be So Lucky—A long and largely unrewarding comedy in which Charles Busch appears, out of drag, as a shrinking-violet electrologist who comes into his own via an unlikely benefactor (Stephen Pearlman). Nell Campbell plays his sister, and Julie Halston is a veritable force of nature as a Scarsdale matron. (Westside Theatre, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

LONG RUNS

ALL IN THE TIMING: John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLOOD BROTHERS:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **AN INSPECTOR CALLS:** Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **JACKIE MASON: POLITICALLY INCORRECT:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477. . . . **THREE TALL WOMEN:** Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE WHO'S TOMMY:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

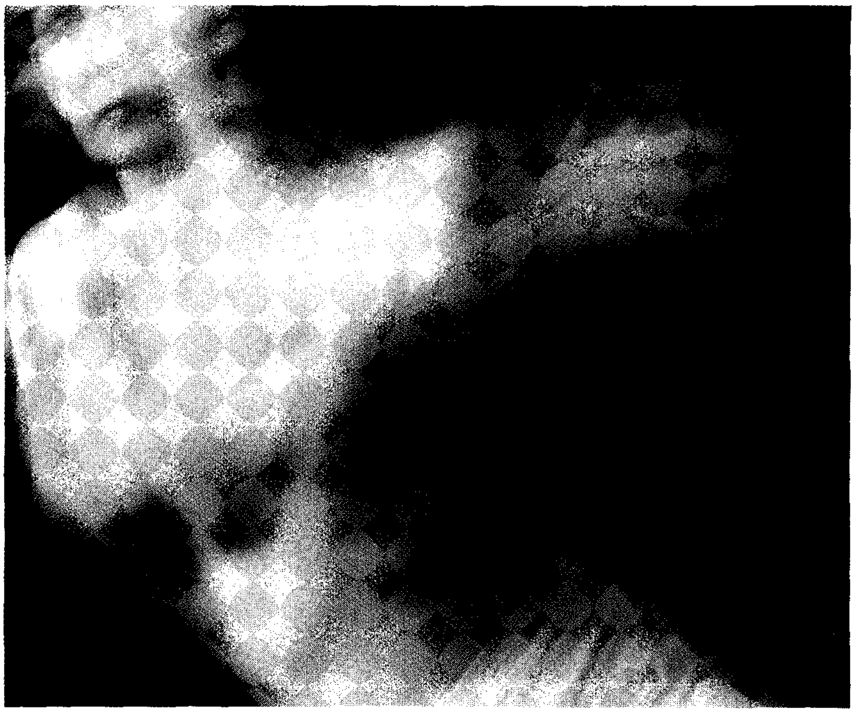
NO(THING SO POWERFUL AS) TRUTH—A performance piece by Dan Hurlin, based on the life of William Loeb, the conservative publisher of the Manchester (New Hampshire) *Union Leader*. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Jan. 25-28 at 8 and Jan. 29 at 3. For information on Hurlin's performance workshop for teens, see For Kids.)

P.S. 122—Jan. 26-29 at 7:30: "She's Just Away!," by Rae C. Wright. Through Feb. 5. . . . ¶ Jan. 26-29 at 9: "The Idiot Variations," Rinde Eckert's new solo piece. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

DANCE

Sans Sculpture

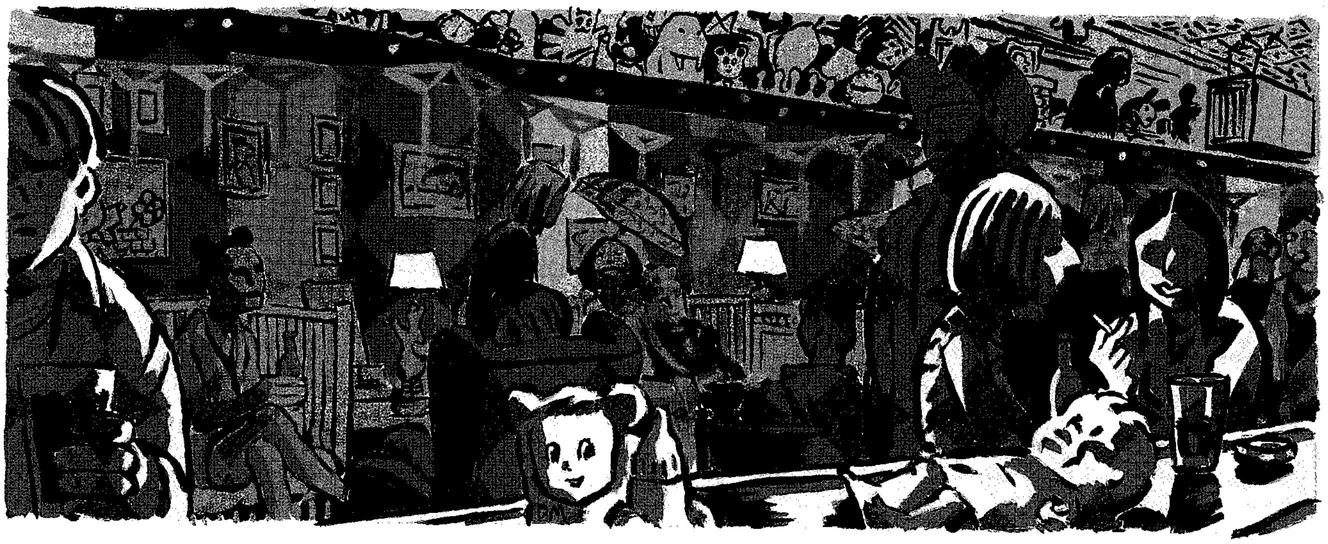
Molissa Fenley has often said that dance is sculpture in space, and it was easy to see what she meant, since there were often sculptures in the spaces where she danced. In "Channel," it was a bronze ring by Richard Serra; in "Nullarbor," a wavy row of stones by Richard Long; in "Witches Float," a suite of nudes by Kiki Smith. In Fenley's latest work, "Sita," which opens her solo program at the Joyce this week, the sculpture you can't avoid seeing isn't there. But there are traces of sculptural form in the photographs projected on shoji-like screens: afterimages of Fenley's circling arms, the shapes repeated like the multiple arms of the Hindu god Shiva, the destroyer, or the fluttering hands of Sita, the embodiment of peace, loyalty, and love. Fenley dances alone, very close to the audience, offering a succession of Sita-like gestures as the photos float behind her.



Molissa Fenley, in one of Sandi Fellman's photographs for "Sita."

At a rehearsal a couple of weeks ago, there were no projections yet. When Fenley finished dancing, Sandi Fellman, the photographer who is collaborating on the piece, brought out a contact sheet, and the two looked for sections of the photos that would be right. ("Here's the area that's like a glacier." "Here's where my fingers look like sandstone.") Fenley seemed unperturbed about the technical details—as serene as the music that the project began with. "Philip Glass made the piece," she said, "and he said to me, 'This sounds like a dance.' And I said, 'Oh, good.' "

SANDI FELLMAN



Babyland, the thumb-suckers' paradise on Avenue A.

DAVID MAZZUCCHELLI

DANCE—Cont'd

New York City Ballet—Jan. 25 at 8: "Interplay," "Concertino," "2 & 3 Part Inventions," and "Glass Pieces." . . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 8: "Serenade," "Duo Concertant," "Chiaroscuro," and "Agon." . . . ¶ Jan. 27 at 8: "Harlequinade" and "The Four Temperaments." . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 2: "Harlequinade," and "The Concert." . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 8: "The Four Temperaments," "Raymonda Variations," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." . . . ¶ Jan. 29 at 1: "Serenade," "Mozart Piano Concerto," and "Glass Pieces." . . . ¶ Jan. 29 at 7: "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," "2 & 3 Part Inventions," and "The Concert." . . . ¶ Jan. 31 at 8: "Serenade," "The Four Temperaments," and "Glass Pieces." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through Feb. 26.)

Twyla Tharp—An evening-length piece, "Red, White & Blues," in which the choreographer m.c.s the program and dances with a seven-member company. The score leaps around the map of Americana, from swing to polka and from doo-wop to "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Jan. 25-27 at 8 and Jan. 28 at 3 and 8.)

Molissa Fenley—The solo dancer in "Sita"; "Bridge of Dreams," with a Laurie Anderson score, choreographed last year for twenty-two dancers and presented here in Fenley's solo rendition; the 1993 work "Witches Float," with a score by Alvin Lucier and sculptures by Kiki Smith; and two short pieces. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Jan. 25-28 at 8 and Jan. 29 at 2 and 7:30.)

Ton Simons and Dancers—The choreographer of the Rotterdam Dance Company presents "Q" (première), with five dancers, four actors, and guitarist Elliott Sharp, who will play his original score. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Jan. 26-29 at 8:30.)

Movement Research Benefit—An evening of dances by Lucy Guerin, the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, the Ralph Lemon Company, and Hot Mouth, to benefit Movement Research, the East Village dance-and-performance center. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. Jan. 28 at 8. For reservations, call 477-6854.)

Pearl Lang Dance Theatre—Five works choreographed by the onetime Graham dancer. Three of Lang's thirty-five works on Jewish themes are on the program: "Three Sephardic Songs" (1978-93); "Tehilim-Psalm 150" (1983); and "I Never Saw Another Butterfly" (1977), based on children's poems found in a concentration camp. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Jan. 28 at 8 and Jan. 29 at 5.)

NIGHT LIFE

Baby Talk

Club crawlers who've never gotten over their kindergarten years should toddle over to Babyland, the new playroom at 81 Avenue A. The theme here is nursery grunge, and the kitschy décor drives it home with a vengeance. The lollipop-colored walls are adorned with potty seats, kites, cartoons, and more stuffed animals than there are at F.A.O. Schwarz, and the floor looks like the set of "Romper Room" after a small explosion: a plastic go-cart and a rocking horse are randomly scattered among a convoy of toy trucks (with burning-candle payloads), several miles of pink, baby-blue, and canary-yellow tinsel, and all kinds of lurid Atomic Age memorabilia. Sick of posing on glamorous leather banquettes? Mingle with the twenty-something pigtails-and-barrettes set in one of Babyland's modified cribs; four of them, padded for safety with cozy pillows, are lined up in a row opposite the bar. (The average crib seats three, and you're not required to wear plastic pants.) Babyland is the brainchild of Deb Parker, a thirty-five-year-old Scarsdale expatriate who originally envisioned a place "that looked like a Coney Island sideshow or a vintage bordello" but decided that a club was "my chance to have children." She's thought of everything, from feeding time to playtime: Babyland features a funky little deli up front, where you can order milkshakes and animal crackers, and there's a Day-Glo rec room, with pinball and pool, in the basement. But watch your soft spot on the way down the stairs.

CONCERTS

Stevie Wonder—The forty-four-year-old father of New Age funk is back in a big way—with a thirty-three-piece orchestra. A generation has grown up since he last released a killer album—"Hotter Than July," in 1980—and kids who know him only from saccharine jingles like "I Just Called to Say I Love You" are in for a surprise: his soon-to-be-released "Conversation Peace" is a tour de force of ballads, up-tempo funk, and (on a wonderful number titled "Sensuous Whisper") hip-hop jazz. Without forcing the point, the album makes it clear that Michael Jackson and Prince owe a large debt to Stevie Wonder. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Jan. 25 at 8.)

Howard Alden—The organization formerly known as the Duke Ellington Society presents a chamber-jazz celebration of early Ellingtonia under the leadership of guitarist Alden. Easily the most gifted of the young players—in taste and stylistic range—he's the right man to bring these old gems to life. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Jan. 29 at 2:30. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

Dora Ohrenstein—The avant-garde vocalist, along with Jazz Passenger Roy Nathanson on sax and Anthony Coleman on keyboards. Also on the bill is a new band called Trousers, with Elise Kermani, Elaine Kaplinsky, and Christine Bard. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Jan. 25 at 9.)

Marlene VerPlanck—Singing jazz standards. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Jan. 25 at 12:30 P.M. Admission by contribution.)

Fernando Tarres & the Arida Conta Group—An Argentine jazz musician and his New York-based outfit. (Washington Square Church, 135 W. 4th St. Jan. 27 at 8. For information about tickets, call 545-7536.)

Green Fields of America—An evening of Irish music, featuring Mick Moloney, Seamus Egan, Eileen Ivers, Jimmy Keane, Regan Wick, and Sheila Ryan; with Kimati Dinizulu and others. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Jan. 28 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

A.K.A., 77 W. Houston St., at Wooster St. (673-7325)—Jan. 25: **ARNIE LAWRENCE AND THE FUNK CO-ELATION.** Lawrence's name was always popping up during the seventies, but since then it's seemed that the saxophonist has been lying low. As it turns out, he's been teaching a whole new generation of musicians (John Popper, the extroverted harmonica virtuoso and singer for Blues Traveler was one of his many pupils). These days, Lawrence's jam sessions are healthy gatherings of experience and youth.

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist **NANCY LA MOTT** is currently in the midst of an extended run. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—With his double bass drums churning the air into pudding, **LOUIE BELLSON,** who wraps up a five-night run on Jan. 29, is still the whirlwind he was when he first came to prominence in the Duke Ellington Orchestra, back in the early fifties—only now he's added composing, arranging, and band-leading skills to his exuberant virtuosity. Also appearing is the purring singer **HELEN MERRILL,** who will re-create the brassy textures of her excellent record "Brownie"—a tribute to the trumpeter Clifford Brown. Dining.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A duskily lit neighborhood bar, where pianists, bassists, and, occasionally, drummers compete for your ear. Truth and beauty usually prevail. Through Jan. 28: a trio featuring the frisky neo-bop pianist **MIKE LE DONNE,** the promising drummer **GREG HUTCHINSON,** and the phenomenally gifted young bassist **CHRISTIAN MC BRIDE.** If these guys fail to swing, something is very, very wrong. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and—holy hotcakes, Batman!—the amazing **EARTHA KITT.** Kitt is still a fierce and funny performer with a feral grip on her audience. She inhabits her songs: when she sings "I Wanna Be Evil," you don't doubt for a second that she could spit tacks. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, the suave and sybaritic **KURT WIETING** is in attendance.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7900)—Through Jan. 29: vocalist **LAVERNE BUTLER** leads a quartet. Drummer **JOE MORELLO** takes over on Jan. 31. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL** has the floor. Dining.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A sleek piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel. Thursdays through Sundays, **DONALD JOHNSTON** is the featured pianist; on weekends he performs with a trio. Dining.

Five Spot, 4 W. 31st St. (631-0100)—Jan. 25-26: The **DAVE DOUGLAS–FRED HERSCH** quartet. Jan. 27-28: The **JOE CHAMBERS** band. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Across the street from Lincoln Center, this restaurant and club features a handsome bar upstairs and a surreal performance space downstairs. Beginning Jan. 31: **TERENCE BLANCHARD,** the only young trumpeter within spitting distance of Wynton Marsalis's virtuosity, leads a polished quartet. Dining.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—An Old New York kind of place, with dark wood panelling, white tablecloths, and brass figurine lamps. Jan. 25-28: **RUSSELL MALONE** and **VICTOR GASKIN.** Malone is the new guitarist on the block, and in the bassist Gaskin, he has a fine compatriot to see him through. Dining.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Jan. 28: Guitarist **DEREK BAILEY** performs with **JOHN ZORN** and **WILLIAM PARKER.** Jan. 29: "The Last Laugh," the 1924 German film, with live music by **DAVID ARNER** and **WILLIAM PARKER AND THE LITTLE HUEY CREATIVE MUSIC ORCHESTRA.** Jan. 31: **MARK RIBOT'S SHREK.** The din this band makes is not unlike something heard at a carnival in Eastern Europe: odd modes, hand drums, and hurdy-gurdies, along with a few modern touches, like Slavic punk and the occasional wall of feedback.

Le Max, 147 W. 43rd St. (764-3705)—Every Wednesday and Thursday evening, **JOHN WALLOWITCH** and **BERTRAM ROSS** present a delightful cabaret revue, the high points of which include an Irving Berlin medley and amusing novelty tunes like "Mahatma Gandhi" and "Bagel and Lox." Dining.

Match, 160 Mercer St. (343-0020)—This tragically hip SoHo *boîte* is the place to be every Sunday night, thanks to the **SHORTY JACKSON LEGACY BLUES BAND,** featuring the eighty-nine-year-old **LAUREL WATSON,** the original "last of the red-hot mamas" (according to Doc Cheatham) and torch singer par excellence. Dining.

Metropolis, 31 Union Sq. W. (675-2300)—A swank basement club, home to high-profile jazz combos. Jan. 26-29: The **ELVIN JONES JAZZ MACHINE.** The drummer has lost none of his explosive energy or his astonishing ability to move the beat in a thousand directions at once. Tuesdays are given over to the **GEORGE GEE ORCHESTRA,** a seventeen-piece swing band.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. The song-and-dance troupe known as **THE MANHATTAN RHYTHM KINGS** are the current stars in residence. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Michael Andrew and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—The Chestnut Room may resemble a hunting lodge decorated by Liberace, but the performances here are no joke. Case in point: **DOROTHY DONEGAN.** Out in front through Jan. 29, Donegan can still scare your pants off with her wild, free-association piano discourses. Now in her seventies, she'll still try anything, even the impossible, interpolating classical themes into Tin Pan Alley, slinging off Tatum volleys, and romping through stride passages when the spirit moves her. It's on-the-edge stuff, fun and life-affirming. Dining.

Village Corner, 142 Bleecker St. (473-9762)—**BROSS TOWNSEND,** who begins a four-night stand on Jan. 29, spends a good deal of time as accompanist for the singer Dakota Staton. He's a tough, two-fisted pianist with a flair for the blues.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Jan. 29: the **JACKY TERRASSON** trio. Terrasson is a defiantly eccentric pianist, the kind of bursting-at-the-seams talent who continually walks the line between daring jaunts of imagination and isn't-this-just-shocking mannerisms. Youthful mischief aside, he is definitely a comer, and he's developed a true trio sound with a little help from bassist Ugonna Okegwo and the remarkable drummer Leon Parker. The **VANGUARD SIXTEEN-PIECE JAZZ ORCHESTRA** celebrates its twenty-ninth-anniversary on Jan. 31.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—Jan. 25-28: Pianist **MULGREW MILLER.** Pianist **JIM MC NEELY,** in on Jan. 31, has the cerebral intensity of Bill Evans and the vigor required to corral the Vanguard Orchestra—which he did for a good part of the past decade. Dining.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. Through Jan. 28: a trio featuring **JUNIOR MANCE, CALVIN HILL,** and **JOE TEMPERLEY.**

ROCK, ETC.

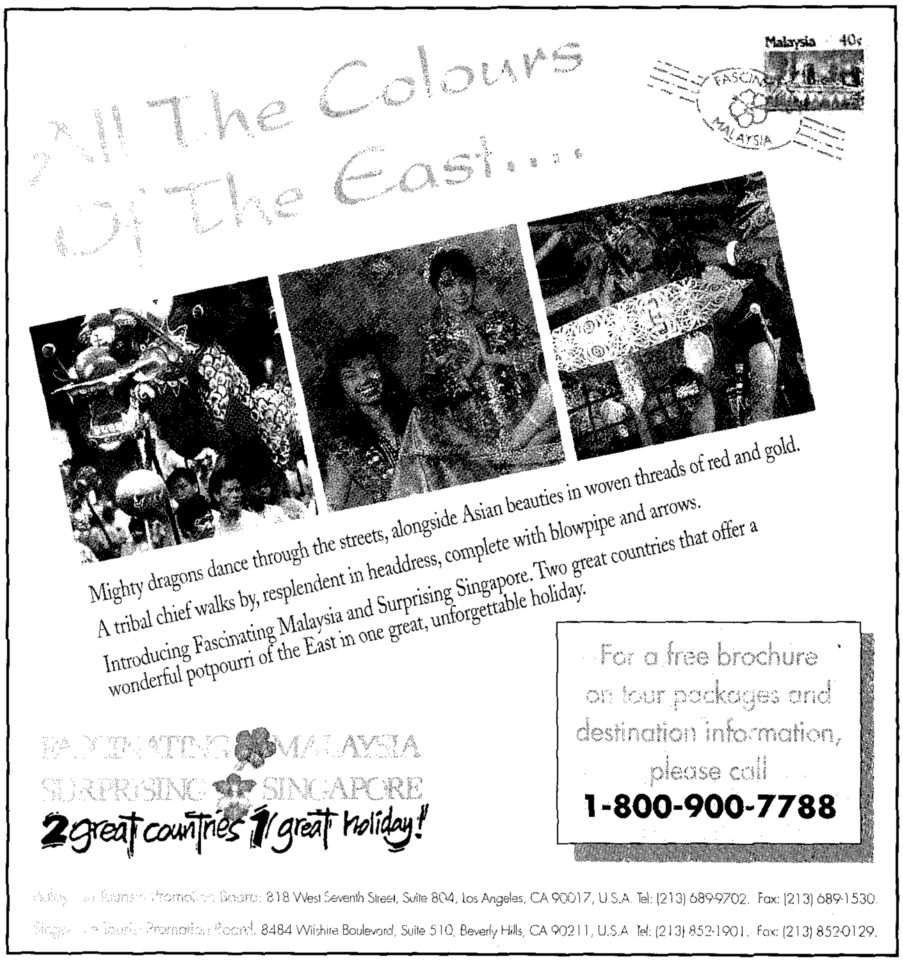
Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (429-8392)—Jan. 28: The **WRENS.** Jan. 29: The **ASS PONYS.**

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—A narrow, graffiti-strewn cave packed every evening with new and used bands. Jan. 24: **FOSSIL.** . . . ¶ Next door, at the neat and comfortable testament to gentrification called CB's Gallery, the **DAN ZANES** trio performs on Jan. 28. Zanes, formerly of the Del Fuegos, is a wafer-thin rock-and-roller who writes dark, dreamy tunes in the manner of Chris Isaak.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—The **MAURICE VAUGHN** blues band has the floor Jan. 25-26, followed by the **OTIS CLAY** revue, on Jan. 27-28.

Don Hill's, 511 Greenwich St. (219-2850)—A tidy little SoHo bar with an above-average P.A. system and topnotch local bands on the docket. Guitarist **JEFF GOLUB** plays on Jan. 25. Friday night is Squeeze Box, a vinyl and velvet gay glamfest, hosted by Mistress Formika.

Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—Everyone is a star here—the



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pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. The fabulous **DRESSING ROOM DIVAS** are your hosts every Friday night.

FEZ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Jan. 27: "The Honeysuckles," a weekly live soap opera. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—This sprawling two-floor establishment has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. Jan. 25-26 belongs to **BARE NAKED LADIES** (five fully clothed Canadian guys, actually). Their first album, "Gordon" (1992), featured eccentrically folkie songs that were tender, jaunty, and free of irony, and covered such subjects as enduring life in the ninth grade and "lying in bed just like Brian Wilson" during a creative slump. On their recent follow-up, "Maybe You Should Drive," the emotions are closer to the surface, the whimsy is wryer, and the music lusher—thanks to the production, by Ben Mink, k. d. lang's collaborator on "Ingénue." This show should provide a blast of wit and warmth. With **JULES SHEAR.** Jan. 27: **BAABA MAAL.** The Senegalese singer is scheduled to headline this summer's Africa Fête (a roving showcase for African pop stars), and it's a well-deserved choice. Like fellow-countryman Youssou N'Dour, Maal offers soaring melodies and churning percussion, and his lyrics dabble in mystical imagery. . . . ¶ Every Sunday night, the Swing Dance Society pays homage to the Lindy Hop, a dance that involves a lot of whirling and the occasional display of underwear. Sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

KAPTAIN BANANA, 101 Greene St. (343-9000)—French cabaret *en travesti* in SoHo. Three drag queens and eight dancers re-create the Court of Versailles, a carnival in Rio, Marlene Dietrich, and the Andrews Sisters. There's also a singing gorilla. Dining.

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—The dirge rockers known as **COME** entertain on Jan. 27.

LIMELIGHT, Sixth Ave. at 20th St. (807-7850)—A church turned eighties hot spot, this unholy venue currently plays host to a variety of techno and alternative acts. **NUDESWIRL** drops in on Jan. 29, followed by electronic trickster **STEVE HILLAGE,** on Jan. 31. Wednesday night is Disco 2000.

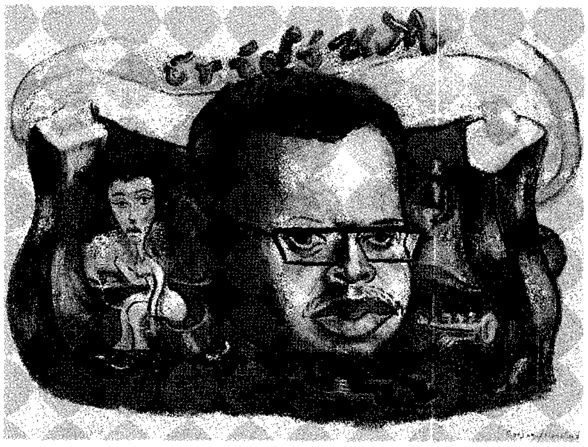
LUDLOW STREET CAFÉ, 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—A modest below-stairs room that looks like a spruced-up tenement apartment. Mondays belong to **BEAT RODEO,** a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mixture of country, blues, Dylan, Byrds, Velvets, and various pop curiosities.

MANNY'S CAR WASH, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—The Upper East Side blues. Jan. 25: The **HIRAM BULLOCK** band.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—Jan. 27: **MADDER ROSE.** Jan. 28: **JOAN OSBORNE** and **KEVIN SALEM.** On "Spider Web," one of twelve great tunes on "Relish," her major-label début (due in March), Osborne dreams that Ray Charles regains his sight and loses his will to write, preferring instead to stay in bed and watch MTV. Osborne's material is rife with such irreverence, and her singing is all guts and growl, evoking everyone from Bonnie Raitt to Courtney Love. Salem has played guitar for Freedy Johnston and Yo La Tengo, and his own record, "Soma City," a collection of forlorn folk-rock gems, is a certified critics' favorite.

MERCURY LOUNGE, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Jan. 25: The **BOTTLE ROCKETS.** Jan. 29: An AIDS benefit, featuring **DEAN AND THE WEENIES.** The towering skinhead Dean Johnson is best remembered for his frenetic performance in the cult film "Mondo New York," in which he appears wearing a tutu. His band, the Weenies, has been terrorizing local audiences for years. Jan. 31: Tattooed East Village folkie **DANIEL CARTIER.**

NELL'S, 246 W. 14th St. (675-1567)—A Victorian-style club, home to an eclectic crowd of downtown youngsters dancing to throbbing funk and techno-pop. Monday night is Funky Buddha, with live bands and d.j. Derek Corley "on the wheels."



Terence Blanchard, at Iridium.

PADDY REILLY'S MUSIC BAR, 519 Second Ave., at 29th St. (686-1210)—**BLACK 47** usually plays on Saturdays, and Speir Mor (Gaelic for Big Sky) performs for a hearty following on Fridays. Séisiún—a traditional Irish jam—is on Thursday nights.

ROSELAND, 239 W. 52nd St. (247-0200)—Ballroom dancing on Thursdays and Sundays. The rest of the week it's another dark, sweaty rock club, with flannel-clad stage divers and the occasional whirling mosh pit. **MEGADETH** wrecks havoc on Jan. 27-28. With Corrosion of Conformity.

S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. **TITO PUENTE** sambas in on Jan. 30. Tuesday nights, S.O.B.'s presents Soul Kitchen, an evening of seventies funk and R. & B. for devotees of Don Cornelius. Thursday nights belong to Giant Step, a roving collective of musicians, rappers, and d.j.s who mix jazz, funk, and hip-hop. Dining.

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Jan. 25: **WEEN.** The Weensters recently released "Chocolate and Cheese," an album of pure, hole-in-the-head weirdness. (One of the best tracks is "Spinal Meningitis Got Me Down.") In a world in which most bands give us everything but the kitchen sink, Ween gives us only the kitchen sink. A typical song includes two distorted guitars and a fairly lame drum track, with Dean and Gene ranting and raving and joking around on top. It may not sound like a winning formula, but much of "Chocolate and Cheese" is inspired, and you just can't stop listening.

WEBSTER HALL, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature rock acts and cheap beer.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—The **BAY CITY ROLLERS,** those painfully cute Scottish imps, invade on Jan. 25. The opening act is Canned Travolta, a punk-disco combo that has just released a cover of "Time to Change," a campy homage to puberty originally performed and recorded by the Brady Bunch. **NICK LOWE** is the main attraction on Jan. 30.

AHMET GORGUN

ART

That Old-Time Nostalgia

AMERICANS have long had a curious nostalgia for a golden age that never existed. Among its earliest and most potent expressions is the work of Thomas Cole (1801-48), the subject of "Landscape into History," an exhibit of more than sixty paintings at the Brooklyn Museum (through April 2). Cole, the English-born founder of the Hudson River school, started out as an ardent Romantic, painting arcadian visions of New World wilderness deeply influenced by his friend James Fenimore Cooper. In his maturity, pessimism emerged.

Cole's masterwork, an allegorical series called "The Course of Empire," prophesies the decline of the American republic under the menacing sway of greed and militarism—a theme that may not be worn out yet. The third of the five paintings, the incandescent "Consummation of Empire" (a thinly veiled critique of Andrew Jackson, swirling with fleshy figures in heroic poses), and its gloomy sequel, "Destruction" (showing the crumbling Empire ablaze), anticipate the opulent narrative pictures of the late Victorians. And though it may look like the curators have crowded the five canvases together, they've only followed Cole's instructions: the Victorians loved a cluttered wall. That taste may have abated, but the obsession with lost innocence still holds America in its thrall.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—Some eighty examples of the creative confluence of Eastern and Western styles are on view in "Orientalism: Visions of the East in Western Dress." From eighteenth-century court gowns to sequinned flapper's shifts to the recent inspirations of Issey Miyake and Romeo Gigli, the show is a fashion freak's dream. Through March 19. . . . ¶ "The French Renaissance in Prints from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France." Through March 19. . . . ¶ "Greek Gold." Forget embarrassment—this is a *humiliation* of riches, as splendid an exhibition of Classical jewelry as we're ever likely to see. Choice items from the Met and the British Museum have been augmented with lovely pieces from the northern coast of the Black Sea—a rare loan from the Hermitage. The workmanship throughout is so delicate that you may want to bring a magnifying glass. Through March 26. . . . ¶ "Painting and Illumination in Early Renaissance Florence, 1300-1450." Anyone who thinks that illuminators took a back seat to the panel painters of the age should see this show, which brings together a group of little masterpieces that are in perfect condition. Their burnished gold and primary colors sparkle with the same intensity they had on the day the paint dried, because they've spent most of their lives between the covers of books. Through Feb. 26. . . . ¶ "Thomas Eakins and the Metropolitan Museum of Art." Through Feb. 26. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Kandinsky: Compositions" gathers seven of the surviving "Composition" paintings, a body of work that was executed between 1910 and 1939. Also on view will be numerous studies in oil, watercolor, ink, and pencil. Starts Jan. 26. . . . ¶ A new installation by Nancy Rubins is the next exhibit in the "Projects" series. Starts Jan. 26. . . . ¶ "Jacob Lawrence: The Migration Series," a sixty-panel work from 1941 that depicts black migration from the South to the North in the period between the two World Wars. (A concurrent show of Lawrence's work is at Midtown-Payson, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.) . . . ¶ "Rem Koolhaas and the Place of Public Architecture." Koolhaas is best known in this country for his 1978 book "Delirious New York." The Dutch architect prefers indeterminacy to logic and flux to form, so he sees freedom rather than alienation in the anonymous sprawl of the metropolis. This show focusses on the recent projects of the Rotterdam-based Office for Metropolitan Architecture (O.M.A.), which Koolhaas founded in 1974 with several colleagues. Through Jan. 31. . . . ¶ "An Eccentric Orbit: Video Art in Australia." (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"The Italian Metamorphosis, 1943-68." Chairs, typewriters, a case of fabulous shoes, a car, a vacuum cleaner—even some painting and sculpture. Although this massive exhibition, which examines the way Italy reinvented itself after the Second World War, sprawls around the rotunda with no real logic, it's a potent reminder of the impact that Italian art and design have had in the past half century. And it's a fun crawl. Through Jan. 29. (Open Sundays

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ART–Cont'd

through Wednesdays, 10 to 6, and Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway—Fifty-six paintings by Antoni Tàpies in a restrospective of the Catalan artist's career. Starts Jan. 26. (A concurrent show, at Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St., opens Jan. 27.) (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Franz Kline: Black & White, 1950-61." Through March 12. . . . ¶ "Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney: Printmakers' Patron." Through March 12. . . . ¶ "Black Male: Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary American Art." Through March 15. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"Thomas Cole: Landscape into History." Through April 2. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Alternative Museum, 594 Broadway—"Discreet Objects." Something of a rarity for a not quite brand-name artist: a retrospective. Freed from the imperative to produce the matched set of work that one-person shows demand nowadays, Maureen Connor, a pioneer of clothing art, is able to show how her vision evolved—from the tentative satire of "Little Lambs Eat Ivy" (1977), a construction of starchy smocked girl's dresses, to the savage bitterness of her recent work. In a series of constructions from the late eighties, cast-iron industrial bottle racks, which resemble medieval instruments of torture, have black lace lingerie twisted around them, and a bathroom scale shows, in the space where the numbers should be, a tiny video of a woman gorging herself on pasta. The work is tough, unlovable, and altogether admirable. Through Feb. 11. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

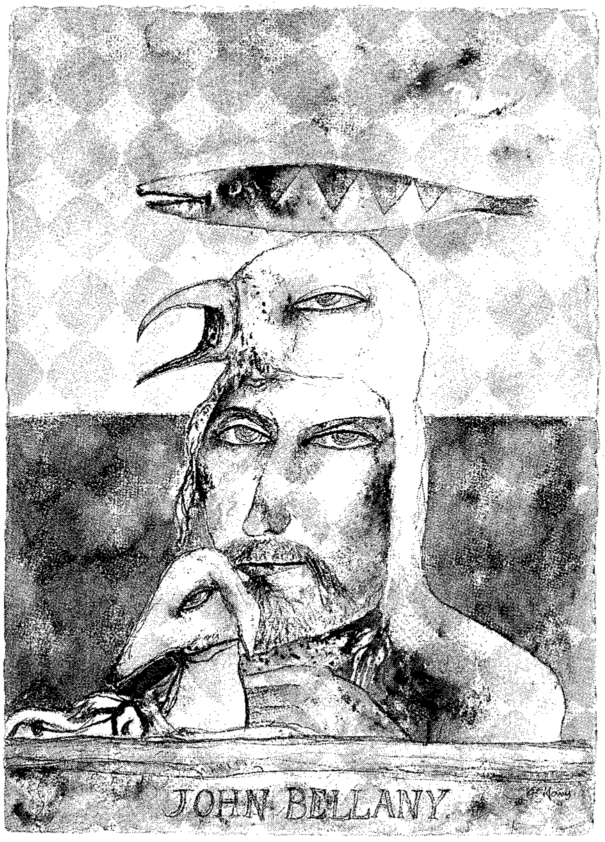
China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—The new Year of the Pig is celebrated in "Animals of the Zodiac," a group of fifty paintings, cutouts, sculptures, and textiles also featuring the Mouse, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, and Dog. Through March 4. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—"John Constable: Drawings, Watercolors, Oil Sketches, and Paintings from a Private Collection." Through Feb. 12. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"Jewish Life in Tsarist Russia: A World Rediscovered." Through March 5. . . . ¶ "Mario Cavaglieri: The Glittering Years, 1912-22" features thirty-six paintings, both interiors and portraits. Through Jan. 29. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45; Tuesday evenings until 8.)

National Museum of the American Indian, 1 Bowling Green—"Creation's Journey: Masterworks of Native American Identity and Belief." . . . ¶ "All Roads Are Good: Native Voices on Life and Culture." . . . ¶ "This Path We Travel: Celebrations of Contemporary Native American Creativity." (Open daily, 10 to 5.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway—Fifty large-scale photographs by Andres Serrano. Examples from all of his thematic series since 1983—including "Bodily Fluids," "Ejaculations," "Immersions" (whence came the notorious "Piss Christ"), "Morgue," and the new "Gun" series—are here. Starts Jan. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, noon to 8.)



Self-portrait by John Bellany (Dintenfass).

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—A survey of forty-seven paintings and works on paper by Emma Amos. Through March 19. . . . ¶ "Sam Gilliam: Recent Monoprints." Through May 14. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Carl Andre—"Sand-Lime Instar," a re-creation of the famous "Equivalents I-VIII" of 1966: eight two-tiered stacks of a hundred and twenty sand-lime bricks each. Whereas traditional sculpture is vertical (and at least implicitly anthropomorphic), in "Equivalents" Andre created horizontal sculpture. This is what radical art looked like thirty years ago. Through Feb. 11. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.)

Milton Avery—A mix of early and late drawings, monoprints, and oils. Through Feb. 1. (Borgenicht, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

William Baziotes (1912-63)—Paintings and drawings in the artist's favored style of biomorphic Abstract Expressionism, along with earlier, figurative works. Through March 4. (Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St.)

John Bellany—Recent allegorical Expressionist works by a Scottish painter. Through Feb. 4. (Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St.)

Rudy Burckhardt—Realistic paintings that, with a touch of the naïve, depict the Maine woods around the artist's home. (Displaced Down-Easters pining for the lakes should see the listings for Dewey, Porter, Welliver, and Jacquette, below.) Through Feb. 18. (De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St.)

William Christenberry—Representative and dreamlike images of rural Southern architecture pervade the drawings, photographs, and sculptures of this Hale County, Alabama, native. Through Feb. 11. (Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St.)

Robert De Niro (1922-93)—Paintings from the seventies and eighties. Through March 4. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St.)

David Dewey—Large-scale watercolors concentrating on the light, architecture, and landscape of the Maine coast, along with similar paintings done in Greece and Spain. Through Jan. 27. (Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St.)

Louise Fishman—Thickly impastoed magazine-size paintings. Through Feb. 4. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

Sam Francis (1923-94) / **Jack Tworkov** (1900-1982)—Large-scale paintings and small

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sketches by this Abstract Expressionist, who died in November. Through Feb. 18. / "A Decade of Painting: 1963-73" surveys Tworkov's shift from his peculiarly controlled Abstract Expressionist canvases to more minimalist works. Through Feb. 11. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

Alfred Jensen (1903-81)—Paintings from the mid-sixties. Through Feb. 11. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St.)

Jacob Lawrence—A retrospective of forty paintings, including several from the series "Struggle: From the History of the American People," and eight new works. Through Feb. 25. (Midtown-Payson, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. . . . ¶ The artist's sixty-panel work, "Migration Series," from 1941, is on view at the Museum of Modern Art.)

Alfonso Ossorio (1916-90)—A collection of the painter and sculptor's wildly colorful assemblages of such disparate elements as glass eyes, animal horns, mirrors, trinkets, and old labels. Through Feb. 11. (Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Fairfield Porter (1907-75)—Thirty-three watercolor portraits, interiors, and Maine and Hamptons landscapes, in the artist's familiar, easygoing representational style. Through March 4. (Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St.)

Rolph Scarlett (1889-1984)—A small group of nonobjective works on paper from 1945, which has the awesome task of living up to the title "The Influence of Kandinsky on American Abstraction." Through Feb. 11. (Washburn, 20 W. 57th St.)

David Smith (1906-65)—"Medals for Dishonor," a series of antiwar bronze reliefs executed between 1937 and 1940. Smith was America's preëminent abstract sculptor before the advent of minimalism in the sixties. In these pieces, however, he worked in the crude, semi-hysterical Surrealist style that functioned as a lingua franca among artists of the Abstract Expressionist generation before they hit their stride. The medals are fascinating as art history but otherwise ungainly. Smith's preparatory drawings and collages are probably more to contemporary taste than the objects themselves. Through Jan. 28. (Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.)

Raphael Soyer (1899-1987)—Twenty paintings spanning the career of this social realist, along with several self-portraits. Through March 4. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Neil Welliver—Large landscape paintings of the Maine woods. Through Feb. 4. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Bettina Werner—Heavily textured paintings in a medium composed of salt, resin, and pigment. Through Feb. 25. (Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St.)

H. C. Westermann (1922-81)—A selection of works—wood sculptures, glass boxes, and bronzes—from the sixties. Through Jan. 28. (Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Antoni Tàpies—A show of recent works by the Catalan painter, which coincides with a retrospective at the Guggenheim SoHo. Opens Jan. 27. Through March 4. (Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St.)

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Phoebe Adams—Copper, wood, and felt floor sculptures containing references to body parts and to literary works—a departure from the artist's earlier, sleek wall pieces. Through Feb. 11. (Marcus, 578 Broadway.)

Eleanor Antin—A new film installation, titled "Minetta Lane—A Ghost Story." Through Feb. 18. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St.)

Richard Artschwager—"Large Drop Drop" (1991), a monumental aluminum-and-black-granite exclamation point. Through Feb. 25. (Kent, 67 Prince St.)

Alan Belcher—Using his own blood, hair, and nails, and other materials, the artist has tackled the self-portrait in this series of twenty-two handmade voodoo-like dolls. Each figure has a black-and-white photograph of Belcher's face stitched onto its head, which is topped with a tuft of his hair. Cloves of garlic, crystals, and coins act as hands and feet. The dolls stand on pedestals, lie prone on tables, or hang pinned to walls; the over-all effect is delightfully, humorously macabre. Through Jan. 28. (Shainman, 560 Broadway.)

Mary Ellen Carroll—Among the works here is "A Modest Proposal"—eight white wool military blankets embroidered with a phonetically written version of Swift's acerbic essay. Through Feb. 11. (Tz'Art, 28 Wooster St.)

Beth Haggart / Polly Apfelbaum—A sculpture-and-video installation in which all of the artist's possessions are deposited in a heap in the center of the gallery. / "Banner paintings," made from dyed fabric that has been cut apart and reassembled. Through Feb. 4. (Postmasters, 80 Greene St.)

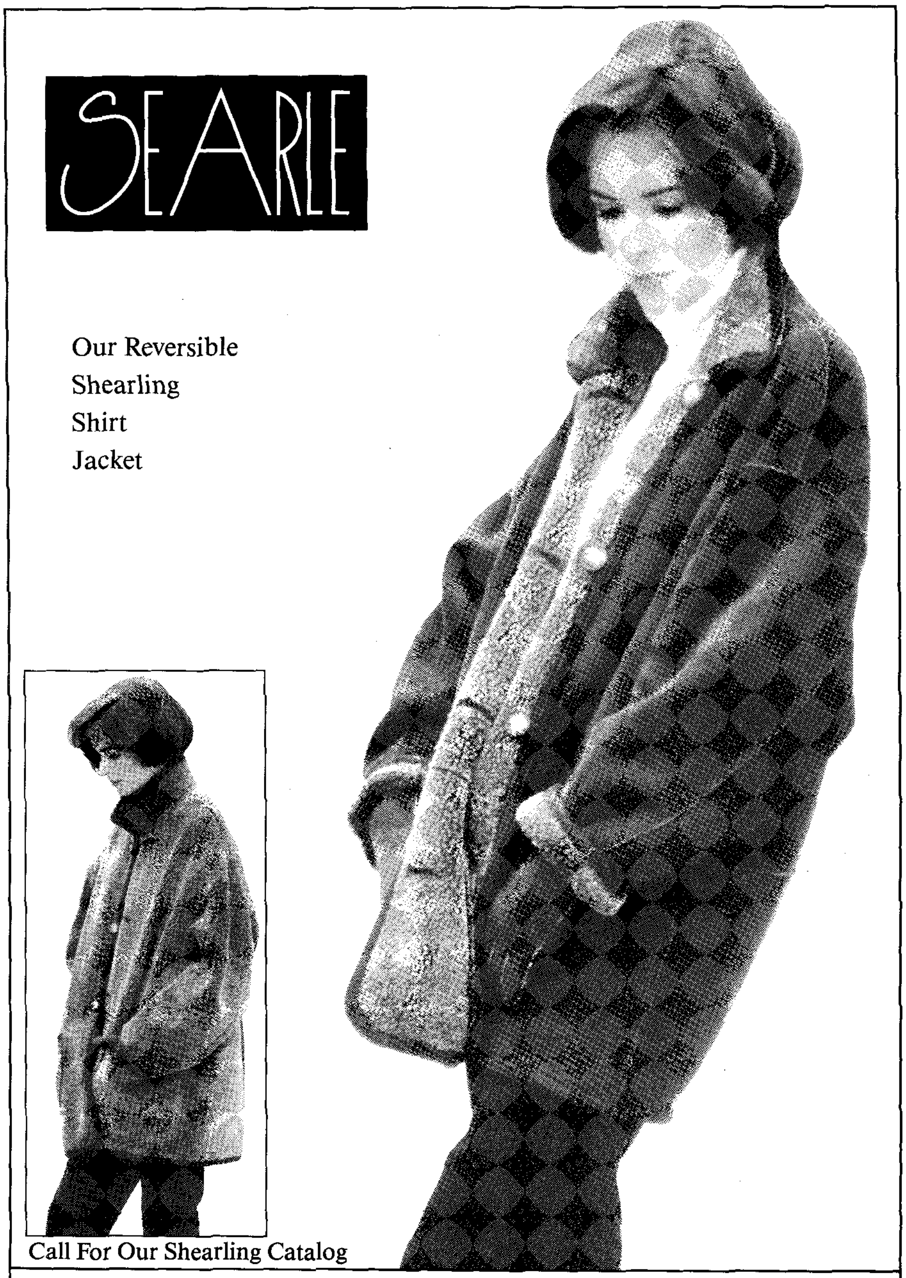
Yvonne Jacquette—Paintings and pastels showing aerial perspectives of night scenes in New York, Hong Kong, and Maine. Through Feb. 11. (Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St.)

Ann Messner—New sculptures in which objects made of cast iron or cast bronze are suspended in womblike bronze encasements. Through Feb. 4. (Maynes, 225 Lafayette St.)

Tatsuo Miyajima—The artist has transformed a large room in this gallery into an arena for thirty small battery-operated cars that sport red or green LED counters, each of which ticks off the numbers one to nine at a different rate. The cars motor around the dark gallery bouncing off each other and an ankle-high barrier, producing a hypnotic sea of randomness. Through Feb. 11. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St.)

Carl Ostendarp—Large, flat, cotton-candy-colored paintings displaying a synthesis of color-field and Pop aesthetics. Through Feb. 4. (Gorney, 100 Greene St.)

Tim Rollins + K.O.S.—At least two minutes of thought must have gone into this suite of paintings: pages from Aristophanes's "The Clouds" with clouds painted over them, and from "The Birds," with birds. Through Feb. 25. (Boone, 417 West Broadway.)



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ART–Cont'd

Dan Walsh—Large, spare acrylic paintings consisting of crisp yellow or black lines resembling musical staffs. The six canvases have an Agnes Martin-like simplicity and purity. Through Jan. 28. (Cooper, 155 Wooster St.)

Lawrence Weiner—The text "Stones&Stones&Stones&Stones&Stones&Stones" appears on the gallery wall; each word is painted in a different color, and the ampersands are neatly carved into the Sheetrock. Through Jan. 28. (Castelli, 420 West Broadway.)

OTHER VENUES

"Outsider Art Fair"—An increasingly hip insider affair: hundreds of paintings, drawings, sculptures, and objects made by eccentrics, visionaries, social outcasts, patients in mental hospitals, and other outsider artists. The fair takes place on Jan. 28, from 11 to 7, and Jan. 29, from 11 to 6. (Puck Building, 295 Lafayette St., at Houston St. For information, call 777-5218.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

(Auction houses display their wares several days before most sales and welcome the merely curious along with the potential bidder. Call the numbers listed for viewing schedules.)

When You Care Enough . . .—Twenty-five thousand greeting cards, produced from the eighteenth through the mid-twentieth century, go on the block in an auction that also includes trade cards, advertising memorabilia, and other mostly American ephemera. (Metropolitan Arts and Antiques Pavilion, 110 W. 19th St. 463-0200. Jan. 31 at 1.)

Sotheby's—The sale of items from the New-York Historical Society collection concludes on Jan. 29, with an assortment of paintings, furniture, and decorative pieces. On Jan. 30, outsider art by Haitian, Mexican, African, and African-American artists, from the collection of Geoffrey Holder and Carmen de Lavallade, goes on sale. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Christie's—Americana looms large in this week's auctions, which include an array of furniture, silver, folk art, and decorative arts (on Jan. 26-27), and notable items from the Mr. and Mrs. Eddy Nicholson Collection (on Jan. 27-28). (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1119.)

William Doyle—An auction of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English and Continental furniture and decorative arts. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730. Jan. 25 at 10 A.M.)

The Winter Antiques Show—The forty-first installment of this winter classic draws to a close. In addition to perusing the offerings of leading dealers, visitors should check out the full-scale reproduction of a drawing room from Richard Jenrette's 1820 Hudson Valley mansion. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. Jan. 25-28, from noon to 9, and Jan. 29, from noon to 6. Tickets at the door.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Diane Arbus (1923-71)—Images shot inside Times Square movie houses between 1956 and 1958. Through Feb. 4. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

Shimon Attie—Photographs of buildings and storefronts in Berlin, onto which the artist has projected images of Jewish life in that city from the years leading up to the Second World War. Through Feb. 11. (Klagsbrun, 51 Greene St.)

Lorna Bieber—This artist appropriates images, which she then alters and reconstructs, using everything from crayons to photocopiers. In making these new large-scale, unframed works, Bieber started with anonymous photos of suburban interiors and exteriors taken in the forties and fifties. Through Feb. 18. (Saul, 560 Broadway.)

Debbie Fleming Caffery—Recent black-and-white photographs taken in Mexico. Through Feb. 25. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St.)

Baron Adolf de Meyer (1869-1946) / **Toni Frissell** (1907-88)—A hundred and twenty vintage magazine and travel prints from throughout his career. / A large retrospective of black-and-white photographs by an artist who had tours of duty with *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and the Women's Army Corps. Through Feb. 12. (International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Susan Derges / **Edward Maxey**—Two series of color photograms showing the development of frogs from tadpole to adult. / Black-and-white abstract images of the American flag. Through Feb. 25. (Danziger, 130 Prince St.)

Benedict J. Fernandez—"The Last Campaign," pictures made during the last year of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,'s life. Through Feb. 15. (Leica, 670 Broadway. Opens Saturdays at noon.)

Arno Fischer / **"White"**—Documentary-style photos of West and East Berlin, made in the fifties. / A group show that presents many gradations in the word's meaning, in works by Friedlander, Eggleston, Hosoe, Levinthal, Frank, Sugimoto, and others. Through Feb. 25. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St.)

Andreas Gursky—Post-industrial landscapes and spaces: a view of a cow pasture from an autobahn overpass; a diptych of the Hong Kong stock exchange; an endless, almost abstract office ceiling. Through Feb. 25. (303 Gallery, 89 Greene St.)

William Klein—"In and Out of Fashion" is a suggestive exhibit rather than a sweeping, satisfying overview. But there's so much going on in Klein's best work that even a show restricted to a single aspect of it gives you a sense of his versatility: you see the satirist, the Surrealist, the editor, and the postmodernist—to name just a few of the Kleins on view. Through Feb. 26. (International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Koichiro Kurita—Large-scale black-and-white landscapes. Through Jan. 28. (Witkin, 415 West Broadway.)

Danny Lyon—Photographs spanning the artist's career, including photomontages of his family, unpublished vintage prints from the "Bikeriders" series, and documentation of the civil-rights movement. Through Feb. 25. (Lowinsky, 578 Broadway.)

László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946)—Photograms, montages, and straight (although not straight-perspective) photographs by the protean Constructivist. Through March 11. (Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

Cindy Sherman—Recent work that combines the familiar props—fake body parts, masks, mannequins, drapery—with such new techniques (for her) as multiple exposures and alternative developing processes. Through Feb. 18. (Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St.)

Paul Strand (1890-1976)—Vintage prints, with an emphasis on the photographer's later work. Through Feb. 4. (Burden, 20 E. 23rd St.)

Hiroshi Sugimoto—New work in which the artist returns to photographing dioramas. These still-lifes are peopled with various prehistoric, political, royal, and notorious figures. Through Feb. 4. (Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway.)

Minor White (1908-76)—Selections from throughout the career of this artist, who was a co-founder of *Aperture*. Through Feb. 25. (292 Gallery, 120 Wooster St.)

"Landmarks of New York"—Views of the city by Abbott, Coburn, Hine, Hofer, Kertész, Meyerowitz, and Ruzicka, among others. Through March 10. (Seagram Building, 375 Park Ave., at 52nd St., fourth floor. Open Mondays; closed Saturdays.)

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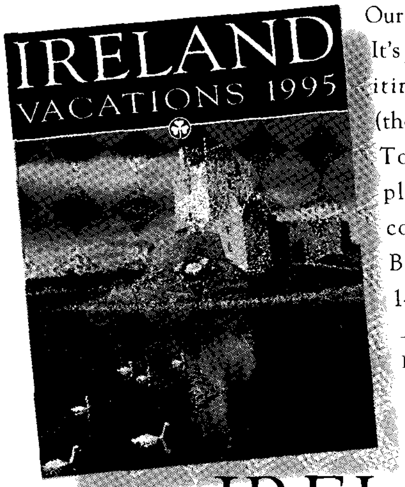

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CLASSICAL MUSIC

Quartets by a Trio

ANYONE listing the geniuses of string-quartet literature would have to place Beethoven and Bartók near the top. Hindemith wouldn't come as readily to mind—unless the mind were the collective intellect of the Juilliard String Quartet. "We absolutely believe that Hindemith should be on the master list of great quartet composers," insists the ensemble's violist, Samuel Rhodes. The Juilliard will argue its case in a three-concert series (at Alice Tully Hall, beginning on January 28), juxtaposing Hindemith's quartets with established classics by Beethoven and Bartók.

Rhodes is predictably proud that Hindemith was a fellow-violist—one of the century's greatest. In addition to making solo appearances, the composer served as the viola department of the Amar String Quartet, which he founded in 1921 specifically to master his own difficult Second Quartet (which had stymied the group initially engaged to première it). By the time he left, eight years later, the Amar had programmed his Second Quartet a hundred and seventy-two times. Bartók was another modernist the Amar championed—they were the first to record a Bartók quartet (his Second, in 1925). Beethoven, of course, was central to their repertoire, too, and the Juilliard series will include his three exuberant "Razumovsky" Quartets (Op. 59). "Both Bartók the colorist and Hindemith the formalist are his descendants," Rhodes explains, "in terms of polyphony, counterpoint, texture, and even harmony. Beethoven is the point of departure for all later quartet composers."

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719.)

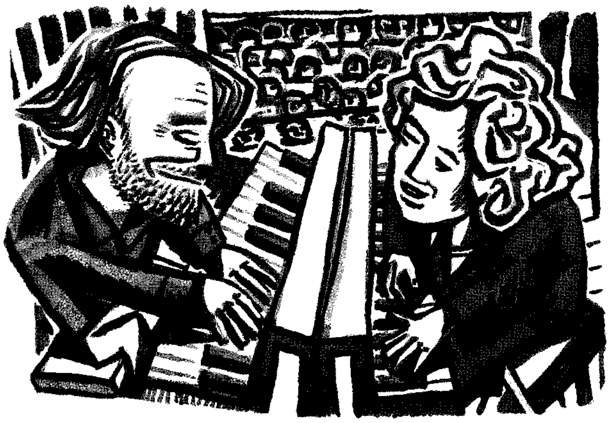
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA—**LE NOZZE DI FIGARO,** with Carol Vaness, Dawn Upshaw, Delores Ziegler, Dwayne Croft, and Simone Alaimo; conducted by James Levine. (Jan. 25 at 8 and Jan. 28 at 1:30.) . . . **SIMON BOCCANEGRA,** with Kiri Te Kanawa, Plácido Domingo, Vladimir Chernov, and Robert Lloyd; Mr. Levine. (Jan. 26 at 8.) . . . With Fabio Armiliato instead of Mr. Domingo. (Jan. 30 at 8.) . . . **TURANDOT,** with Gwyneth Jones, Teresa Stratas, Lando Bartolini, and Paul Plishka; Nello Santi. (Jan. 27 and Jan. 31 at 8.) . . . **L'ELISIR D'AMORE,** with Young Ok Shin, Jerry Hadley, Mark Oswald, and József Gregor; Edoardo Müller. (Jan. 28 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—At Avery Fisher Hall, Kurt Masur conducting. Jan. 25-27 at 8 and Jan. 31 at 7:30: Dvořák's Cello Concerto (with Yo-Yo Ma) and Schumann's Symphony No. 3 (the "Rhenish"). . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 8: Victor Herbert's Cello Concerto No. 2 (with Mr. Ma) and Schumann's Symphony No. 3.

CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA—At Carnegie Hall, Christoph von Dohnányi conducting. Jan. 25: Schoenberg's symphonic expansion of Brahms' G-Minor Piano Quartet, as well as Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 2 (with Emanuel Ax). . . . ¶ Jan. 26: Harrison Birtwistle's "Earth Dances" and Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Mr. Ax). . . . ¶ Jan. 27: Schnittke's "(K)ein Sommernachtstraum," Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony No. 1, and Brahms' Symphony No. 1. . . . ¶ Jan. 28: A concert performance of Berg's "Wozzeck," with Hildegarde Behrens, Donald Kaasch, and Franz-Josef Kapellmann. (Evenings at 8.)



Frederic Rzewski and Ursula Oppens, at the Miller Theatre.

RUSSELL CHRISTIAN

WEBERN FESTIVAL—The conclusion of Juilliard's annual Focus! Festival, which this year is devoted to the music of Webern and his followers. Jan. 25: Vocal and instrumental chamber music, including Webern's "Four Stefan George Songs" and various published song sets (Op. 4, Op. 14, Op. 15, and Op. 23), Cello Sonata, "Three Little Pieces" (for cello and piano), Rondo for String Quartet, and Quartet (Op. 22, for violin, clarinet, tenor saxophone, and piano), as well as works by Dallapiccola and Feldman. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St.) . . . ¶ Jan. 26: Songs and chamber works by Webern, including three "Avenarius Songs," his "Dehmel Songs," and two published song sets (Op. 8 and Op. 25); piano pieces (the Rondo and the Op. 27 Variations); the "Three Traditional Rhymes"; and both string quartets. Kurtág's "Officium Breve" and Boulez' "Structures, Book I" (for two pianos) round out the program. (Juilliard Theatre.) . . . ¶ Jan. 27: Diego Masson conducts the Juilliard Symphony in Webern's "Six Pieces for Orchestra" (Op. 6) and his symphonic arrangement of the ricercar from Bach's "A Musical Offering," as well as in Sofia Gubaidulina's "Offertorium." Harold Rosenbaum directs the New York Virtuoso Singers in Webern's "Entflieht auf Leichten Kähnen," and Mr. Masson leads all forces in Webern's "Das Augenlicht" and Cantata No. 2. (Alice Tully Hall.) (Evenings at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required for all festival concerts, call 769-7406.)

SPIT ORCHESTRA—A thirty-five-member contemporary-music ensemble, conducted by Brad Lubman. In its début concert, the group performs Glenn Branca's "Harmonic Series Chords," Lois V Vierk's "Devil's Punch-

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bowl," Julia Wolfe's "Tell Me Everything," and the première of Elliott Sharp's "Racing Hearts." (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Jan. 25-26 at 8.)

Manhattan Chamber Sinfonia—Glen Cortese conducting. Jan. 27 at 8: Lawrence Widdoes' "Memento Mori," Amy Cheney Beach's Piano Concerto in C-Sharp Minor (with Joanne Polk), and Schumann's Symphony No. 3. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Jan. 29 at 3: The same program, but without the Widdoes work. (Winter Garden, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. No tickets necessary.)

Crosstown Ensemble—A twenty-member modern-music group, performing the première of Norman Yamada's "How It Is," Ligeti's Piano Concerto (featuring Kathleen Supové), Magnus Lindberg's "Corrente I," Lutoslawski's "Slides," and two quarter-tone works by Giacinto Scelsi. Eric Grunin conducts. (Tribeca Hall, New York Academy of Art, 111 Franklin St. Jan. 28 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

New York Chamber Symphony—Vladimir Feltsman leads five Bach keyboard concertos from the piano. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Jan. 28 at 8 and Jan. 29 at 3.)

City Island Baroque Ensemble—Cellist Christopher Costanza is featured in three concertos by C. P. E. Bach. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 1-718 885-2478. Jan. 29 at noon.)

BachWorks—Richard Erickson directs the choir and period-instrument ensemble in Bach's Cantata No. 155 and Buxtehude's cantata "Befiehl dem Engel," among other works. (St. Paul's German Lutheran Church, 315 W. 22nd St. Jan. 29 at 5. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

Galatea Ensemble—The conductorless chamber orchestra plays Mozart's "Così Fan Tutte" Overture, Roger Bergs' "Fantasia on Strings," Haydn's Symphony No. 85 ("la Reine"), William Grant Still's Romance for Saxophone and Small Orchestra, and Chris DeBlasio's Prelude and Fugue for Soprano Saxophone and Strings; with saxophonist Paul Cohen. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Jan. 30 at 8. For information about tickets, call 1-718 783-5519.)

RECITALS

Frederic Rzewski and Ursula Oppens—These two distinguished champions of modern keyboard music have decided to establish an ongoing duo to explore the two-piano and four-hand literature. On their duo-début recital, they'll perform Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony No. 2 (Op. 38b, in the composer's own two-piano version), as well as the premières of Lois V Vierk's "Spin 2," Christian Wolff's "Two Pianists," and Mr. Rzewski's "Night Crossing with Fisherman." (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Jan. 25 at 8.)

Leo Bachmann—Performing the première of his solo composition "Palette of Sounds," a forty-five-minute exploration of the sonic possibilities of the tuba. (Swiss Institute, 495 Broadway, third floor. Jan. 26 at 7. No tickets necessary.)

Bargemusic—An all-Beethoven program. Violinist Ik-Hwan Bae and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott perform the A-Minor Violin Sonata (Op. 23); Ronald Thomas and Ms. McDermott offer the A-Major Cello Sonata; and all join for the "Archduke" Trio. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Jan. 26 at 7:30 and Jan. 29 at 4.)

Composers String Quartet—The foursome plays Cowell's Quartet No. 5 and "Quartet Euphometrics," Perle's Quartet No. 5, Schuller's Quartet No. 2, Davidovsky's Quartet No. 4, and Copland's "Two Pieces." (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Jan. 26 at 8.)

New York Philomusica—In a performance of Shostakovich's Cello Sonata, Beethoven's C-Minor String Trio, and Schumann's D-Minor Piano Trio. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 26 at 8.)

Cosmopolitan Chamber Players—Performing Beethoven's G-Major String Trio (Op. 9, No. 1), Schumann's "Fantasiestücke," Wieniawski's "Études-Caprices," and Brahms' G-Minor Piano Quartet. (Weill Recital Hall. Jan. 26 at 8.)

Talk and Play—This week offers a hubbub of lecture-concerts. Jan. 27 at 7: Pianist Ruth Laredo talks about Mendelssohn and the Schumanns; violinist Ani Kavafian and cellist Nathaniel Rosen join her in several of the composers' works. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949.) . . . ¶ Jan. 28 at 7: Pianist Caroline Stoessinger considers Dvořák's A-Major Piano Quintet and his "Cypresses" for string quartet; the Stamic String Quartet assists her in the performances. (Metropolitan Museum.) . . . ¶ Jan. 31 at 6: Flutist Eugenia Zukerman and fortepianist Anthony Newman play works by Hummel, Beethoven, Czerny, and Moscheles and read from letters and other historical documents that illuminate the early-nineteenth-century Vienna in which they all composed. (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. For information about tickets, call 930-0571.)

Sergey Schepkin—Pianist, performing Bach's six keyboard partitas. (Weill Recital Hall. Jan. 27 at 8.)

Juilliard String Quartet—Opening a series of three concerts that explore the quartets of two anniversary boys—Hindemith (born in 1895) and Bartók (died in 1945)—plus Beethoven. This installment comprises Hindemith's Quartet No. 3, Bartók's Quartet No. 3, and Beethoven's F-Major Quartet (Op. 59, No. 1) (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Jan. 28 at 3.)

Four Nations Ensemble—Performing sonatas and piano trios by Mozart, Clementi, and Haydn. (Walter Reade Theatre, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. Jan. 29 at 11 A.M. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

North/South Consonance—Music by contemporary Californians Emma Lou Diemer, Henry Onderdonk, JoAnn Kuchera-Morin, Will Ogdon, and Robert Greenberg. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Jan. 29 at 3. No tickets necessary.)

Bridgehampton Chamber Music—Performing Mozart's B-Flat-Major Piano Trio (K. 502), Brahms' B-Major Piano Trio (Op. 8), and Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony No. 1 (Op. 9b, as arranged by Webern for reduced forces). (Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. Jan. 29 at 5 and Jan. 30 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 750-5776.)

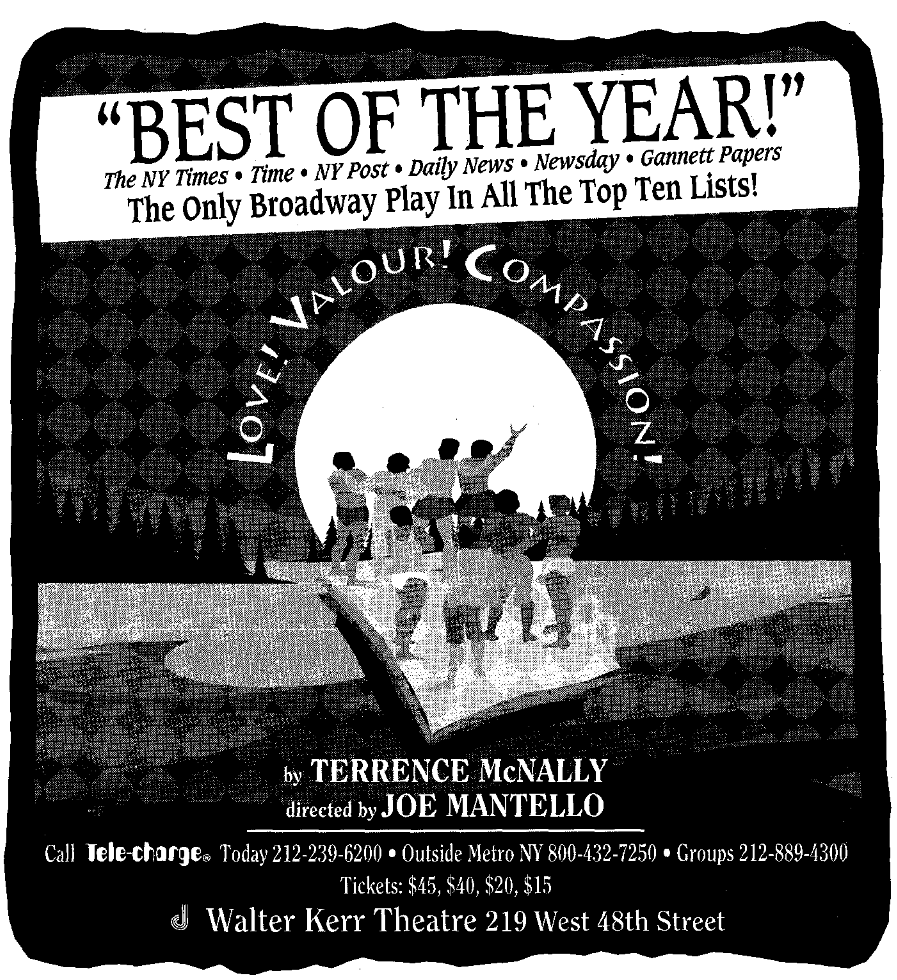
Christopher Costanza—Cellist, with pianist Ilan Rechtman, performing Beethoven's Cello Sonatas No. 2 and No. 5. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Jan. 29 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Cynthia Phelps—The principal violist of the New York Philharmonic plays Schumann's "Märchenbilder," Britten's "Lachrymae," Brahms' F-Minor Sonata (Op. 120, No. 1), and Bach's Viola da Gamba Sonata No. 2; with pianist James Gemmell. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Jan. 29 at 8. For information about tickets, call 586-4805.)

New York New Music Ensemble—Offering Oliver Lake's "Flirtation Blue"; Paul Schoenfield's Trio for Clarinet, Violin, and Piano; Babbitt's "Beaten Paths" and "None but the Lonely Flute"; and Foss's "Echoi." (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 30 at 8.)

Melodramas—Actress Claire Bloom and pianist Brian Zeger perform the premières of three melodramas (spoken texts with musical accompaniments), by Lee Hoiby, Robin Holloway, and Ned Rorem. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Jan. 30 at 8.)

Phyllis Bryn-Julson and Mark Markham—The soprano and the pianist perform music by Purcell and Charles Wuorinen (including two premières). (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 31 at 8.)



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Year of the Pig—The two-week celebration of the Chinese New Year begins Jan. 31. It's 4693, the year of the pig again, and children born during the last pig year, twelve years ago, are supposed to have that animal's traits: tolerance, curiosity, and a certain knack for complicated plans. On Jan. 28 at 10, children can dance the lion dance outside the China Institute, and take on the character of Piggy or the Monkey King (or Queen) at a workshop in Beijing Opera face painting, at 2. Then the little Piggies and Monkeys can tour the Institute's exhibit "Animals of the Zodiac: Celebrating Chinese New Year." (125 E. 65th St. 744-8181. Registration for the workshop, which is free, is required.)

Epic Drama To Go—Performance artist Dan Hurlin teaches teen-agers to create the sort of sweeping one-person multicharacter dramas that he specializes in. Participants in his workshop, "Historical Drama in Twenty Minutes," take their creations from concept to performance in a single afternoon. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Jan. 28 at 1.)

Three Cheers for Chairs—The popular Chair Awareness Day returns to the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, with three programs in one afternoon: a tour of unusual modernist chairs from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; a reading from "Be Seated: A Book About Chairs," by James Cross Giblin; and a workshop in which real chairs are the take-off point for children's theatrical imaginings. (18 W. 86th St. 501-3011. Jan. 29 at 1.)

"New Operas for New Ears"—Two new works by Bruce Adolphe—one chamber music, the other opera, each less than an hour long—introduce children to classical music. (John Jay Theatre, 899 Tenth Ave., at 59th St. 769-7008. Jan. 28-29 at 11 and 1:30.)

"The Hating Pot"—A theatre piece by author and composer Elizabeth Swados, blending songs and monologues about black-Jewish relations and incorporating the reactions and perspectives of its thirty young cast members. A benefit for the Covenant Foundation. (John Houseman Theatre, 450 W. 42nd St. Jan. 29 at 6. For reservations, call 420-0604.)

"The Great Brain"—Theatreworks/USA adapts the John D. Fitzgerald story about a frontier brainiac who uses his power to finagle a bike for himself. But when his parents discover what he's up to, they make him help Britches Dotty, a new girl in town, learn to read. (Promenade Theatre, Broadway at 76th St. 677-5959. Jan. 28-29 at 10:30 and 12:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

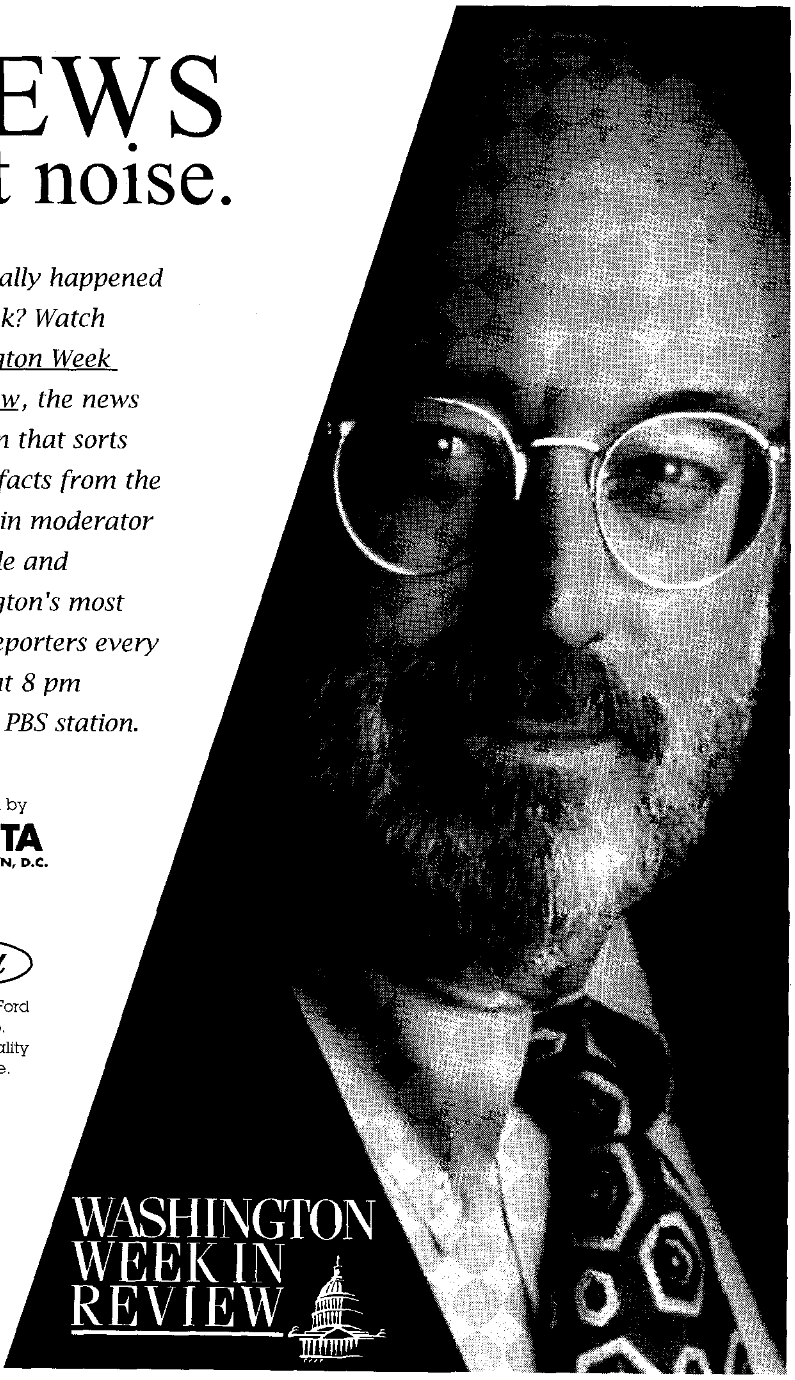
C.F.D.A. Awards—The Council of Fashion Designers of America and the industry at large gussy up for the annual awards ceremony and party, which take place Monday evening, Jan. 30, at the New York State Theatre. While tickets to the event are dear—and scarce—ogling from the Lincoln Center esplanade is free. Cocktails start at six, and the extravagantly dressed continue to arrive until the ceremony begins at 9. Roseanne and Princess Diana are slated to present awards; winners, announced in advance, include women's-wear designer Richard Tyler and the Wonderbra. For information about tickets to the awards and the dessert celebration that follows, call 921-9070.

Indian Affairs—The Thunderbird American Indian Dancers gather this weekend and next for their annual dance concert and powwow. During performances, Louis Mofsie, of the Hopi and Winnebago tribes, will explain cultural elements behind the movements in such traditional dances as the Fancy Dance and the Shawl Dance. In the concert's final section, the audience is invited to join the pageantry onstage, as dancers from ten tribes nationwide come together for a Round Dance of friendship. The Theatre for the New City is headquarters for the ongoing powwow. (155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109. Jan. 27-28 at 8 and Jan. 29 at 2 and 5. Through Feb. 5.) . . . ¶ The American Museum of Natural History continues its film-and-lecture series on indigenous peoples. On Jan. 28-29 at 2 and 3:30, Ina McNeil of the Lakota tribe explains the use of dolls and beadwork designs in Lakota culture. On Jan. 29 at noon, Native American filmmakers will be present for a screening of their work. Among the six short films and videos are Randy Redroad's "Haircuts Hurt" and Dean Curtis Bear Claw's "Warrior Chiefs in a New Age." (Central Park W. at 79th St. No charge beyond museum admission.)

Readings—Jan. 27 at 10: After poet Larry May warms up the crowd at the Nuyorican Poets Café, Bob Holman will referee this week's slam, between Cheryl B and Cathy Bowman, authors of "Pubic Enemy #1" and "1-800-HOT-RIBS," respectively. (Nuyorican Poets Café, 236 E. 3rd St. 674-3778.) . . . ¶ Jan. 30 at 8: Nick Zedd, Carl Watson, and Jennifer Jazz, three writers whose fiction shares themes of sexuality, agoraphobia, and transgression, read from their work. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.) . . . ¶ Jan. 31 at 7:30: Pearson Marx will read from her first novel, "On the Way to the Venus de Milo." (Books & Co., 939 Madison Ave., at 74th St. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—Jan. 26 at 6: Frederick R. Brandt will trace the beginnings of modern design in the decorative arts. (Bard Graduate Center, 18 W. 86th St. 501-3011. Tickets at the door on the night of the lecture.) . . . ¶ Jan. 31 at 6:30: Ronald Otsuka will discuss bamboo and its traditional uses in flower arrangement, folk art, and the tea ceremony. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. For information, call 338-0159.)

Walks and Tours—Jan. 29 at 11: Adventure on a Shoestring will get a head start on the Chinese New Year with its tour of Chinatown. For information, call 265-2663. . . . ¶ Jan. 29, every forty-five minutes from 11 to 5: Tour guides from the Lower East Side Tenement Museum take visitors through a restored tenement. For information, call 431-0233.



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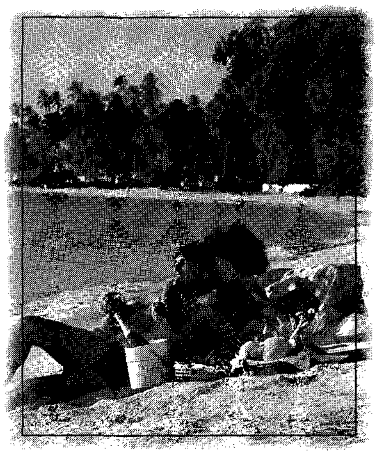

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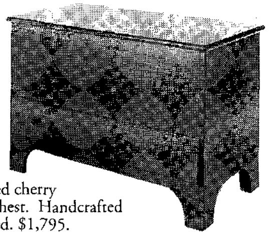

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THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Before Sunrise—A romantic comedy by Richard Linklater. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) Opening January 27.

Highlander: The Final Dimension—Christopher Lambert as the supernatural Scot, engaged in a transcontinental battle against a four-hundred-year-old wizard, played by Mario van Peebles. Also with Deborah Unger. Written by Paul Ohl; directed by Andy Morahan. Opening January 27. (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Manhattan Twin, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

Miami Rhapsody—A comedy by David Frankel. (Reviewed below in Current Films.) Opening January 27.

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Anthony Lane, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre addresses and phone numbers are listed on page 30.)

Bad Company—Ellen Barkin plays an industrial spy, and Laurence Fishburne is the C.I.A. agent who infiltrates her espionage ring, in a movie directed by Damian Harris. With Frank Langella, Michael Beach, and Gia Carides. Written by Ross Thomas. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 1.)

Brother Minister: The Assassination of Malcolm X—A documentary about the 1965 murder of the controversial Nation of Islam leader. Written and directed by Jack Baxter and Jefri Aalmuhammed. (57th St. Playhouse.)

Camilla—The late Jessica Tandy has the title role in a movie about an elderly woman searching for a lost love (Hume Cronyn). Bridget Fonda plays Camilla's new friend and inspiration. Directed by Deepa Mehta. Written by Paul Quarrington. (Village East Cinemas.)

Colonel Chabert—A veteran of the Napoleonic Wars (Gérard Depardieu) discovers that his avaricious wife (Fanny Ardant), who thought he was dead, has remarried and claimed his inheritance. Based on Balzac's 1832 novel and written by Jean Cosmos, Veronique Lagrange, and the director, Yves Angelo. In French. (Lincoln Square.)

Death and the Maiden—Roman Polanski has had a career of alarming symmetry: the spectacular rise from "Knife in the Water" to "Chinatown," then the steady decline from "The Tenant" to "Bitter Moon"—and now this: Ariel Dorfman's fashionable, overblown stage play turned into a flat, uninspired thriller. The situation, involving a triangle of sex and suffering, sounds like classic Polanski, but the director seems oddly adrift from his material; the perverse, obsessive vigor of his younger years is gone. The ridiculous plot unfolds at a remote seaside house in an unnamed Latin-American country. An attorney (Stuart Wilson) and his wife (Sigourney Weaver) receive a visit from one Roberto Miranda (Ben Kingsley). The wife, convinced that Miranda is the man who tortured and raped her during their country's era of oppression, determines to get her own back; but all she has to go on is his voice, and the movie titillates us with the possibility that she has the wrong man. A more vulgar director—and less serious performers—might have had the nerve to admit that this is schlock posing as moral philosophy, but Polanski and his cast honor the self-importance of the script, and the result is fairly unwatchable.—A.L. (1/16/94) (Village Theatre VII and Paris.)

Disclosure—In Barry Levinson's movie version of the Michael Crichton best-seller, Michael Douglas plays an executive whose livelihood is threatened by his sexually predatory new boss (Demi Moore). The presence of Douglas, who has made a career of being pursued by beautiful, dangerous women, turns this sexual-harassment thriller into instant camp. Once again, he's the poster boy for men's fear of aggressive women—the Clarissa Harlowe of male-backlash cinema. In the picture's floridly silly centerpiece scene, Moore jumps his bones in her new office and he struggles manfully, showing us the hairy chest beneath the hero's ripped bodice. Once that hilarious encounter is over, the movie gets ordinary in a hurry; it's tasteful, bland, and only mildly entertaining. With Donald Sutherland, Caroline Goodall, Roma Maffia, and Dennis Miller. Screenplay by Paul Attanasio.—T.R. (12/19/94) (Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

Dumb and Dumber—Stipulated: Jim Carrey, as an easily distracted limo driver, and Jeff Daniels, as a dim dog groomer, are a first-rate pair of baggy-pants Gumps—they can double you over with a straggly line reading, a deadpan that betrays no mental pulse, or a semi-schizophrenic grin. But the screenplay for this deliberately over-the-top (under-the-bottom?) farce—about Carrey's unwitting retrieval of some ransom money and his effort to return it to his dream gal (Lauren Holly) in Aspen—doesn't pass muster as a string of moronic skits (studded with urine and fart jokes) or as a lampoon of buddy movies. The director, Peter Farrelly (who co-wrote with his brother Bobby Farrelly and Bennett Yellin), slips on his own comic puddles.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

Far from Home: The Adventures of Yellow Dog—The kids in this boy-meets-dog adventure are un-actory—and so is the dog. After introducing the mysterious weathered Labrador into a Pacific Northwest family, the writer-director, Phillip Borsos, simply subjects the father (Bruce Davison), his elder son (Jesse Bradford), and their new pet to a storm at sea that leaves the child and dog stranded onshore. As the pair treks through virgin forest, Borsos' picture-making transcends his skeletal storytelling. Some of the scenes have visual grandeur, but if you want a mythic lift you'll have to resee "The Black Stallion." With Mimi Rogers as the mother and Joel Palmer as the kid brother; cinematography by James Gardner.—M.S. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Manhattan Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, Lincoln Square, and National Twin.)

Germany Year 90 Nine Zero and **JLG by JLG**—A double bill of Jean-Luc Godard films: a 1991 sequel to "Alphaville" (1965), about life in East Berlin after Communism, starring Eddie Constantine; and an autobiographical film made in 1994. The former is in French and German, the latter in French. (Little Theatre.)

Higher Learning—John Singleton's blood-and-thunder campus melodrama wallows in contemporary racial and sexual turmoil, while Singleton himself seems to be back in film school. Parallel story lines about a Midwestern misfit turned skinhead (Michael Rapaport), a smart black track star (Omar Epps), and a naïve Orange County coed (Kristy Swanson) converge with an apocalyptic bang. Singleton diagrams such issues as athletic exploitation and racial polarization on the flimsiest poster board and rouses snickers with his heavy-breathing treatment of Swanson's budding bisexuality. The actors are best when they relax—which Laurence Fishburne certainly can't do in the role of a poli-sci prof who enunciates like Yul Brynner's King of Siam. He even says, "Et cetera, et cetera." With Ice Cube, Jennifer Connelly, and Tyra Banks.—M.S. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Gemini, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Houseguest—Big-screen sitcom or political parable? On the anti-Newt side, the hero is raised in an orphanage and becomes addicted to get-rich-quick schemes. On the pro-Newt side, the orphan makes his fortune by writing the autobiographical "Handbook for the Houseguest." Sinbad plays an urban trickster who convinces a gullible suburban family man (Phil Hartman) that he's a boyhood friend. It's a star vehicle in which the vehicle runs over the star. With the screenwriters (Michael J. Di Gaetano and Lawrence Gay) fumbling simple scenes, and the director (Randall Miller) bursting them to smithereens, Sinbad's surprises have no taking-off point and no destination. Co-starring Kim Greist—and McDonald's.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

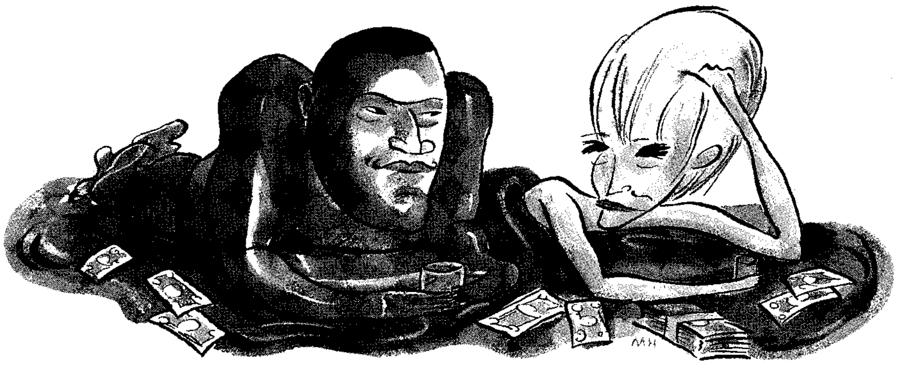
Immortal Beloved—Bernard Rose's new biography of Beethoven presumes, as movies will, that all creative outbursts are sparked by a crazy personal life, a supposition that allows the composer (Gary Oldman) to behave like a rock star; the film is only minutes old when he trashes a hotel room. Rose filters our view of the musician through Anton Schindler, Beethoven's secretary (Jeroen Krabbé, who looks more like Beethoven than Oldman does). But the film is flat. Sadly, Rose's approach has grown more stolid since his last film, "Candyman." Only once does he aim high, in a great kitsch-cosmic shot of the infant genius lost in a sea of stars. Valeria Golino, Isabella Rossellini, and the admirable Johanna Ter Steege play the three main women in Beethoven's life—the nominations for Best Supporting Muse. There's no surprise in the winner, nor in the choice of music—a roster of greatest hits.—A.L. (Village Theatre VII, First & 62nd Cinemas, East 85th Street, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Ladybird, Ladybird—A poor, abused mother (Crissy Rock) leaves her four children alone in a women's refuge on a night that fire breaks out. Social workers take the kids away and later refuse to let her keep two babies she has with a gentle Paraguayan (Vladimir Vega). Gripping but limited, this factually based account of her futile custody fights, written by Rona Munro, epitomizes the downbeat realism of the director, Ken Loach. Although he criticizes the mother for giving in to anger (and resists demonizing the social workers even when they betray class bias), the way Loach shapes the material suggests that he gets off on her rage. The movie becomes one paroxysm after another. Because it's so fatalistic, you're flabbergasted when the end titles announce that the couple retained custody of three future babies.—M.S. (Film Forum.)

Legends of the Fall—Edward Zwick's film, based on Jim Harrison's brawny novella, is a father-and-sons saga, in which three handsome brothers (Brad Pitt, Aidan Quinn, Henry Thomas) compete for the approval of a stern patriarch (Anthony Hopkins). At first, the picture plays like "East of Eden" with a bonus brother; it gets sillier as it goes. Halfway through, Pa suffers a stroke, and Hopkins' performance turns into a mad music-hall impersonation of a peg-leg pirate. He squints, he hobbles, he bellows incomprehensibly, and his outrageous scenery-chewing reveals the movie's true nature: it's the Monty Python version of "Bonanza." Also with Julia Ormond and Gordon Tootoosis. Screenplay by Susan Shilliday and Bill Wittliff.—T.R. (1/9/95) (Village Theatre VII, 34th St. East, Beekman, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Ziegfeld, and Lincoln Square.)

Little Women—Gillian Armstrong's movie is more naturalistic—less storybooklike—than the previous screen versions of Louisa May Alcott's novel about a poor but noble New England family in the eighteen-sixties. In this rendering, the Marches—mother, father (mostly absent), and four daughters—inhabit a coherent, fully realized world. It's a deceptively audacious picture. Armstrong and the screenwriter, Robin Swicord, treat Alcott's familiar coming-of-age saga as if it were the story of American culture's coming of age, and, amazingly, they make their grand conception stick. Winona Ryder, as the aspiring writer Jo, gives a luminous performance; she shows us that even this remarkable young woman comes out of a family, and out of a society. Also with Susan Sarandon, Trini Alvarado, Claire Danes, Kirsten Dunst, Samantha Mathis, Christian Bale, Gabriel Byrne, and Mary Wickes.—T.R. (1/9/95) (Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

The Madness of King George—Alan Bennett's stage play has moved to the screen, with the same star (Nigel Hawthorne), the same director (Nicholas Hytner), and the same story, about the King of England's decline, in the years 1788-89, from cheerful disciplinarian to lewd, unsleeping ranter. His behavior, unacceptable even by the notorious standards of the monarchy, troubles his ministers, upsets his wife (Helen Mirren, underused), and puffs up the ambitions of his scurrilous son (Rupert Everett, overweight). It's a fine dramatic predicament—and that's how it stays, never really pressing forward or pulling us into a plot. The sovereign recovers, and the drama resolves itself without much fuss, though with more triumphal pomp than is required. This reactionary softness tends to blunt Bennett's pointed ironies, but there is plenty of relish here—in Ian Holm's fierce turn as a country physician, and in Hawthorne's blend of thundering and whimpers.—A.L. (1/16/94) (Angelika Film Center, 19th Street East 6, Baronet, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)



Laurence Fishburne and Ellen Barkin in "Bad Company."

MARCELLUS HALL

A Man of No Importance—Albert Finney's string of distinctive performances hits a knot with this poignant whimsy about a sexually repressed gay bus conductor in early-sixties Dublin. He regales his passengers with the words of Oscar Wilde, stages "Salome" in a church hall, and eventually struts out of the closet in a Wildean getup, complete with green carnation. The writer, Barry Devlin, and the director, Suri Krishnamma, have conceived their hero as such a gentle, eccentric dreamer that Finney can't locate a core; he relies on tortuous expressions of elfish desperation. With Tara Fitzgerald, Brenda Fricker, Michael Gambon, and Rufus Sewell.—M.S. (Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Miami Rhapsody—Gwyn (Sarah Jessica Parker) loves Matt (Gil Bellows)—only she's not sure. Her mom (Mia Farrow) loves a young male nurse (Antonio Banderas)—only she's not sure, either; maybe she really loves Gwyn's dad (Paul Mazursky). Gwyn's sister has zipped straight from marriage to adultery without stopping at fidelity, and her married brother has just fallen for a model. David Frankel wrote and directed this comedy, which sounds like a lot of fun but somehow manages to be hardly any fun at all. Some of the scenes have a lovely burnished look, but you can smell the punch lines a long way off. And Frankel's desire to be Woody Allen is so remorseless that it becomes embarrassing—you keep thinking, Where's Tony Roberts? The funniest thing about the movie is Naomi Campbell's attempt at acting. Isn't there some kind of Dorothy Lamour Award for performances like this?—A.L. (Cinema I; starting Jan. 27.)

Murder in the First—Kevin Bacon, Christian Slater, and Gary Oldman, in a drama based on the Second World War-era murder trial of Henri Young, who had been convicted of theft and imprisoned at Alcatraz in the late nineteen-thirties. Directed by Marc Rocco. Written by Dan Gordon. (Village East Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Nell—The title character of Michael Apted's film is a young woman (played by Jodie Foster) who has been brought up in a remote cabin in the North Carolina woods, and who speaks a private language. The filmmakers set up an irresistible human mystery, but the closer they get to Nell the less interesting she becomes; by the time it's over, the picture is speaking a language no one could understand. The heroine, bathed in romantic moonlight, turns into a one-woman pagan idyll, while remaining stubbornly asexual. Foster's performance, full of trick vocal effects and stylized gestures, is abstract and ultimately baffling. As you watch her swaying and gyrating sensuously to the rhythms of nature, you can't help wondering how this backwoods hermit managed to pick up all that classy Martha Graham technique. With Liam Neeson, Natasha Richardson, and Richard Libertini. Screenplay by William Nicholson and Mark Handley, from a play by Handley.—T.R. (12/19/94) (Coronet, Art Greenwich Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Regency.)

Nobody's Fool—Paul Newman plays Sully, a divorced, erratically employed construction worker in a dingy upstate New York town. Robert Benton's movie (based on a novel by Richard Russo) is essentially a series of low-key comic vignettes in which the hero,

CURRENT FILMS—Cont'd

who presents himself as an ornery, self-sufficient loner, tries to deal with the exasperating presence of other people: irritable neighbors, demanding friends, disappointed family members. Not much happens, but the movie bobs along amiably to the rhythm of Newman's dry, deeply funny performance, and the tiny pleasures accumulate like the snow that covers the town. By the end, even the picture's dogged uneventfulness seems like a virtue. Benton doesn't oversell the significance of his characters' mundane problems, and he winds up giving us something unusual—a graceful and accurate depiction of everyday life in an old, cold place. The terrific supporting cast includes Bruce Willis, Melanie Griffith, Jessica Tandy, and Gene Saks.—T.R. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Tower East, Guild, and Lincoln Square.)

Sankofa—A model (Oyafunmike Ogunlano) on a photo shoot in West Africa is hurled back in time to the era of slavery, in a film written and directed by Haile Gerima. (Thalia.)

Sarraounia—The Mauritanian writer-director Med Hondo's epic, about a late-nineteenth-century tribal queen (Ai Keïta) who defends her people during the French conquest of West Africa. With Jean-Roger Milo, Feodor Atkine, and Didier Sauvegrain. In French. (Thalia.)

S.F.W.—A satire about a disaffected twenty-year-old (Stephen Dorff) who becomes a national celebrity after terrorists hold him and two friends hostage in a convenience store. Directed by Jefery Levy; written by Danny Rubin and Levy from the 1990 novel by Andrew Wellman. (Waverly, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

Strawberry and Chocolate—The Cuban director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea charts the efforts of Diego (Jorge Perugorria), a gay artist, to seduce David (Vladimir Cruz), a straight and, frankly, rather boring student. Their flirtation starts over dishes of ice cream (hence the title) and, rather charmingly, never finds fruition in bed. It's a daring movie to have come out of Cuba, although Gutiérrez Alea's grasp of the radical temperament may seem unsophisticated to audiences here—he maps the sexual flatly onto the political. Diego kicks out against government restrictions, David lives quietly within them (wouldn't it have been more intriguing the other way around?), and the performances match the conceptions: Perugorria is camp and winning, Cruz is a lump. But this very naïveté becomes entwined with Gutiérrez Alea's benevolence. The picture is as much a love letter to Havana as Nanni Moretti's "Caro Diario" was to Rome. Often the camera just takes in the view, and there's a genuine wrench at the end when Diego decides to leave. Co-directed by Juan Carlos Tabío; screenplay by Senel Paz. In Spanish.—A.L. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Tales from the Crypt: Demon Knight—All the sick gags, hot lights, and gore this side of hell can't recharge the antique and attenuated plot about an Everyman (William Sadler) warding off a Satanic emissary (Billy Zane). This time it's set in a motel that used to be a church, and it's peopled with such lowdown types as a whore (Brenda Bakke), her dumb john (Thomas Church), and an ex-con maid in a work-release program (Jada Pinkett). The demons look like poor relations of the Crypt Keeper, the series host. Zane seduces the humans with cheap dreams: the generic fantasies of generic characters. At least Sadler's gravelly intensity gives the horror a bit of traction. With CCH Pounder, John Schuck, and Dick Miller. Ernest Dickerson directed from a script by Ethan Reiff, Cyrus Voris, and Mark Bishop.—M.S. (Manhattan Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, Olympia, and National Twin.)

Tom and Viv—The unhappy saga of T. S. Eliot's first marriage, transformed into a cautionary tale with a clear moral: stay away from poets. Willem Dafoe plays the young Eliot with a curious Boer accent and a look on his face that suggests he would be happier back in the jungles of "Platoon." As Vivienne, Eliot's distressed wife, Miranda Richardson gives such an overloaded performance that the simple drinking of a cup of tea becomes unwatchable. (If Vivienne really did behave like this, no wonder Eliot was in despair.) The movie regards the poet as a chilly repressive who locked away first his feelings and then—by extension—his wife. This view is, to put it mildly, open to argument, but the movie—sour, slow, and far more disdainful than the man it aims to expose—simply isn't good enough to sponsor useful debate. Brian Gilbert directs, heavily; the screenplay is by Michael Hastings (who wrote the original play) and Adrian Hodges. Those who think that poetry is a waste product of neurosis will have a lovely time.—A.L. (12/12/94) (Village East Cinemas.)

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000).
Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171).
Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th (477-6600).
Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th (982-0400).
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th (924-3363).
Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th (529-6799).
19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th (260-8000).
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th (689-6548).
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th (532-5544).
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th (683-0255).
Eastside Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 55th (755-3020).
Sutton I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th (759-1411).
Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th (759-2262).
Plaza, 42 E. 58th (355-3320).
Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th (935-6420).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th (759-4630).
Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th (355-1663).
Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th (753-6022).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd (513-5408).
Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th (832-1670).
Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th (737-2622).
New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th (744-7339).
68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th (734-0302).
Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st (879-1313).
East 85th Street, 1st Ave. at 85th (249-5100).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th (534-1880).
Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th (876-2400).
86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th (249-1144).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110).
Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd (929-8037).
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th (929-3350).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th (255-8800).
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd (513-5402).
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd (989-0060).
Guild, 33 W. 50th (757-2406).
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th (765-7600).
57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th (581-7360).
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th (265-2520).
Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th (586-1900).
Paris, 4 W. 58th (980-5656).
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th (752-5959).
Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st (247-5070).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd (265-7466).
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, B'way at 63rd (757-2280).
Regency, B'way at 67th (724-3700).
Lincoln Square, B'way at 68th (336-5000).
84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th (877-3600).
Thalia, B'way at 95th (316-4962).
Metro Cinema I and 2, B'way at 99th (222-1200).
Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th (865-8128).

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th (354-0900).
Embassy I, B'way at 46th (302-0494).
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th (730-7262).
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way (869-8340).
National Twin, B'way at 44th (869-0950).

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Blue Collar (1978)—The phenomenally successful young screenwriter Paul Schrader in his début as a director, with a script he wrote with his brother Leonard. It's about three Detroit auto workers (Richard Pryor, Yaphet Kotto, and Harvey Keitel) who rob their union headquarters; the destruction of their friendship as a result of the robbery is used to illustrate the you-can't-win thesis. Shot in an ominous, fatalistic style, the film says that the system grinds all workers down, that it destroys their humanity and their hopes. Though the picture seems dogged and methodical, it is graced with a beautiful performance by Kotto, as a man who's gentle and pleasure-loving, and an unusual one by Pryor, who plays a turncoat with mean, calculating little eyes.—P.K. (Whitney Museum; Jan. 28.)

He Who Must Die (1958)—This French film, based on Nikos Kazantzakis's "The Greek Passion," was made by the American (political) expatriate, Jules Dassin, on Crete. It's set in 1921, when the Cretan villagers, living under the traditionally decadent Turkish Agha (Grégoire Aslan makes him a dear, cynical old pederast), are about to stage their annual passion play. The survivors of another village, burned out by the Turks, come to ask for refuge; the town brass (including the head of the local church) drive them out, but the shepherd chosen to play Christ rallies his disciples to their aid. You get the idea. This big, emotionally overwrought film was very popular at American art houses. With Pierre Vaneck, Melina Mercouri, Jean Servais, and Roger Hanin. In French.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 28.)

Mamma Roma (1962)—In Pier Paolo Pasolini's over-conceptualized second film, Anna Magnani (who else?) plays Mamma Roma, a prostitute with a heart as big, and goals as confused, as the whole Eternal City. She goes legit by selling vegetables from a cart and takes custody of her weak-willed teenage boy (who doesn't know about her shady past), but the demands of her former lover/pimp keep landing her back in the life. Pasolini both admires and questions the woman's determination to push her child into the middle class. She puts her street smarts at the service of false values; at one point, she even engineers a blackmail scheme to get him a waiter's job in a flourishing restaurant. Pasolini's Marxist-Catholic imagery reaches its heavy-handed nadir when, in prison, the son is strapped to the *letto di contenzione* ("punishment bed"). As photographed by the great Tonino Delli Colli, it makes for one fancy crucifixion. In Italian.—M.S. (Film Forum.)

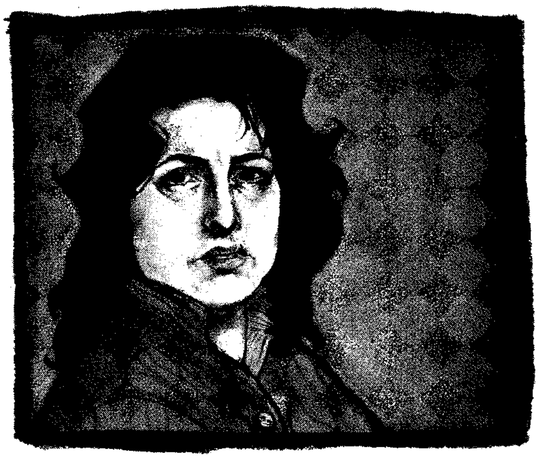
Never on Sunday (1960)—Melina Mercouri, as the happy whore who goes to bed only with men she likes, in Jules Dassin's clumsy fable about the joys of amorality and the stupidity of virtue. Pinheaded Shavian ironies and an exhaustingly robust heroine, but a great success. In English and Greek.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 27 and 31.)

Police Story II (1988)—Jackie Chan's Hong Kong cop movies are light on their feet and light at heart. They take the pattern set by "Bullitt"—a top officer struggling with incompetent, P.R.-conscious higher-ups; an attractive, stressed-out girlfriend; and tangled intrigue—and play it for hyperactive roughhouse comedy. Chan is the Gene Kelly of chop socky, and sometimes the Donald O'Connor. This picture showcases him as both filmmaker and star: it contains at least one hilarious piece of movie parody (involving an ominous bouncing ball) and the usual abundance of his athletic derring-do. He intersperses high-speed hand-to-hand combat with improbable stunt work and then, behind the credits, he rolls outtakes that reveal their difficulty. Unlike the Wizard of Oz, Chan invites you to look behind the curtain. He has the confidence of a real wizard. In Cantonese.—M.S. (Cinema Village; Jan. 28.)

Topkapi (1964)—Comic grand larceny in Eric Ambler terrain—Istanbul. The gang in this Jules Dassin thriller includes Peter Ustinov, Melina Mercouri, Maximilian Schell, Robert Morley, and Akim Tamiroff, and they all work too hard at being merry, lovable scoundrels.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 28.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)—"The War" (Jon Avnet)...."The Specialist" (Luis Llosa)...."StarGate" (Roland Emmerich)...."The River Wild" (Curtis Hanson)...."Eat Drink Man Woman" (Ang Lee; in Mandarin)...."The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert" (Stephan Elliott).



Anna Magnani, the star of "Mamma Roma."

CHRISTINA LEIGH

Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-1717)—"Germany Year 90 Nine Zero" (1991, Jean-Luc Godard; in French and German) and "JLG by JLG" (1994, Godard; in French).

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—Through Jan. 26: "Latcho Drom" (Tony Gatlif, in Romany).... ¶ A program of films starring Jackie Chan, all in Cantonese, with English and Chinese subtitles. Jan. 27: "Drunken Master II" (1994, Lau Ka Leung and Chan)....Jan. 27: "Drunken Master" (1978, Yeun Woo Ping)....Jan. 28: "Police Story II" (†)....Jan. 28: "Police Story" (1985, Chan)....Jan. 29 and 31: "Project A II" (1987, Chan)....Jan. 29 and 31: "Project A" (1983, Chan)....Jan. 30: "Operation Condor" (1991, Chan)....Jan. 30: "Super Cop" (1992, Stanley Tong).

Film Forum 1 and 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)—**theatre 1:** "Mamma Roma" (†).... **theatre 2:** Through Jan. 26: "Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!" (1965, Russ Meyer).... ¶ Films by Andy Warhol. Jan. 27-28 at 1:45 and 5:30: "Bike Boy" (1968)....Jan. 27 at 4 and 11:15: "The Velvet Underground and Nico" (1966)....Jan. 27-28 at 7:30, Jan. 29 at 1 and 7:30, and Jan. 30-31 at 7: "The Chelsea Girls" (1966)....Jan. 28 at 3:45 and 11:05: "My Hustler" (1965) and "Haircut (#1)" (1963)....Jan. 29 at 4:45: "Poor Little Rich Girl" (1965) and "Beauty #2" (1965)....Jan. 30 at 2 and 4:30: "Paul Swan" (1965), "Bufferin" (1966), and "Life of Juanita Castro" (1965)....Jan. 30 at 10:35: "The Loves of Ondine" (1968)....Jan. 31 at 3 and 5: "Lonesome Cowboys" (1968)....Jan. 31 at 10:35: "Vinal" (1965) and "Lupe" (1965).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films directed by Jules Dassin. Jan. 26 at 2:30 and Jan. 29 at 2: "Phaedra" (1962)....Jan. 26 at 6: "Rififi" (1956, in French)....Jan. 26 at 8:15 and Jan. 30 at 6: "Promise at Dawn" (1970, in French)....Jan. 27 at 2:30: "Night and the City" (1950)....Jan. 27 at 6: "A Dream of Passion" (1978, in Greek and English)....Jan. 27 at 8:15 and Jan. 31 at 6: "Never on Sunday" (†)....Jan. 28 at 2: "He Who Must Die" (†)....Jan. 28 at 5: "Topkapi" (†)....Jan. 29 at 5 and Jan. 31 at 2:30: "10:30 P.M. Summer" (1966)....Jan. 30 at 2:30: "The Naked City" (1948).... ¶ Jan. 26 at 3 and 6: "Ballot Measure Nine" (1994, Heather MacDonald).... ¶ A program of British television films by Alan Clarke. Jan. 27 at 3: "Scum" (1977)....Jan. 27 at 7: "Made in Britain" (1983)....Jan. 27 at 8: "Director, Alan Clarke" (1991, Corin Campbell-Hill), a documentary about the director....Jan. 28 at 2: "Diane" (1975)....Jan. 28 at 5: "The Firm" (1988)....Jan. 29 at 3: "Penda's Fen" (1974)....Jan. 29 at 5: "Beloved Enemy" (1980).... ¶ Jan. 30 at 6:30: A program of films by Anne Robertson.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—"Beyond Perestroika: Jews and History in the Global Village." Jan. 25 at 2: "Russian Ragtime" (1993, Sergei Ursulyak; in Russian)....Jan. 25 at 4:15: "Balagan" (1993, Andres Veiel; in German)....Jan. 25 at 6:30 and Jan. 26 at 4:15: "The Light of Dying Stars" (1993, Charles Matton; in French)....Jan. 25 at 8:45: "Ladies' Tailor" (1990, Leonid Gorovets, in Russian)....Jan. 26 at 2: "Freud Leaving Home" (1991, Susanne Bier; in Swedish)....Jan. 26 at 6:30: "Just Beyond That Forest" (1991, Jan Lomnicki; in Polish)....Jan. 26 at 8:30: "Comrade Stalin's Trip to Africa" (1991, Irakli Kvirikadze; in Russian).... ¶ Jan. 27-28 at 1 and 6:30, Jan. 29 at 1:15 and 6:30, Jan. 30 at 1, and Jan. 31 at 1 and 6:30: "Tsahal" (1994, Claude Lanzmann; in French).

Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—A program of films and videos by, or about, black American males. Jan. 25 at noon: "Nothing But a Man" (1964, Michael Roemer)....Jan. 25 at 3:30: "Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle" (1983)....Jan. 26 at 2: "Killer of Sheep" (1977, Charles Burnett)....Jan. 26 at 6:30: "Bless Their Little Hearts" (1984, Billy Woodberry).... Jan. 27 at noon: "My Brother's Wedding" (1983, Burnett)....Jan. 27 at 3:30: "To Sleep with Anger" (1990, Burnett)....Jan. 28 at noon: "Ashes and Embers" (1983, Haile Gerima)....Jan. 28 at 3:30: "Blue Collar" (†)....Jan. 29 at 11:30: "Passing Through" (1977, Larry Clark)....Jan. 29 at 2:30: "Hoop Dreams" (1994, Steve James, Frederick Marx, and Peter Gilbert).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—Jan. 28 at 2: A panel discussion with Hal Hartley, Mike Spiller, Steve Rosenzweig, and Dan Ouellette.... ¶ Jan. 29 at 4:30: "Two-Lane Blacktop" (1971, Monte Hellman).... ¶ Jan. 29 at 2: "Trust" (1991, Hartley).... ¶ Jan. 29 at 5: "Hélas Pour Moi" (1993, Jean-Luc Godard).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Jan. 29 at 7, the feature will be Jacqueline Susann's "Valley of the Dolls" (1967, Mark Robson), with Barbara Parkins, Patty Duke, Sharon Tate, and Susan Hayward.

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Jan. 31 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Savage Nights" (1994, Cyril Collard; in French).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Jan. 27 at 8 and Jan. 29 at 5: Two different programs of short films by Stan Brakhage.... ¶ Jan. 28 at 4: A program of seven early short films by Rudy Burckhardt.... ¶ Jan. 28 at 6:30: "The Art of Vision" (1961-65, Brakhage).... ¶ Jan. 29 at 7: A program of five recent short films by Burckhardt.

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through Feb. 12: "20/20: Papa Watch Me Fly" (1983). (Showings Tuesdays through Sundays at 2.)

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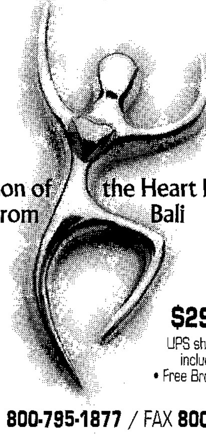

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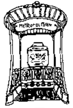

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

MALCOLM LITTLE'S BIG SISTER

LAST week, almost thirty years to the day after the assassination of Malcolm X, and as his daughter Qubilah Bahiyah Shabazz was pleading not guilty to charges of participating in a conspiracy to assassinate Louis Farrakhan, publishers were getting ready to bid on a proposed biography of Malcolm, to be written by his half sister, Ella Little Collins, and her son, Rodnell.

Both mother and son feel that what has been overshadowed by all the hyping of Malcolm, and surely will be lost once again in the controversy surrounding his daughter, is—in the old formula they have taken as their book's working subtitle—"The Man Behind the Myth." "My mother and I are writing this book to set the record straight about Malcolm X," Rodnell says. The elegantly dressed Rodnell, who considers himself an orthodox Muslim, is a forty-nine-year-old systems analyst who lives in Boston; he was a professional on the tennis circuit between 1972 and 1984, and still walks with an easy, athletic lope.

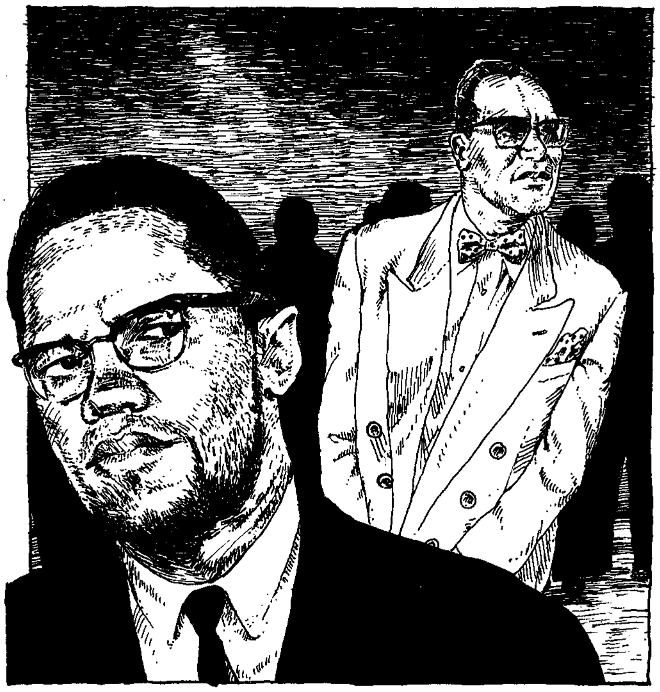
According to the book proposal (which is being represented by Palmer & Dodge, in Boston, and contains a remarkable assemblage of photographs, ranging from Malcolm's baby pictures to his shrouded corpse), it was Ella to whom the young Malcolm Little "turned most often for advice and support," from the time she became his legal guardian, when he was fourteen, until his assassination. In his autobiography Malcolm wrote of Ella, "She was the first really proud black woman I had ever seen in my life. She was plainly proud of her very dark skin. This was unheard of among Negroes in those days. . . . The way she sat, moved, talked, did everything, bespoke somebody who did and got exactly what she wanted. . . . I had never been so impressed with anybody." Ella and Rodnell say that they were both with Malcolm when he made all the big decisions of his life: joining the Nation of Islam, leaving the Nation of Islam, travelling to Mecca.

TODAY, Ella lives in a nursing home outside Boston. At eighty-one, she wears thick glasses, which only partly help her limited vision, and is confined to a wheelchair. (She has undergone a double leg amputation, the result of diabetes.) And yet on a recent visit with her and her son you felt about her an air of dignity and strength and, simply in the way she wore a purple head wrap, a certain sense of style as well. You knew what her half brother had been talking about.

The Collinses say they turned down a request to consult on Spike Lee's film biography of Malcolm, and they scowl at the distortions they see in Lee's version of events. "You had to be a real idiot to wear the kind of zoot suit that Lee used," Rodnell complains. "Spike overemphasized the length and importance of Uncle Malcolm's street-life period. His breaking-and-entering phase lasted no more than three weeks before he was arrested."

MOTHER and son agree that in their book they want to delve into the plot to murder Malcolm, and to account not only for the role of the Black Muslims but for the involvement of the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. The book will discuss Ella's brushes with Farrakhan, which began as early as 1958, when she "brought certain of his actions to the attention of officials in the Boston temple." ("One of Farrakhan's stage names was the Charmer," Rodnell says, shaking his head.) Shortly afterward, Ella left the Nation, never to return. When the talk turns to Malcolm's assassination, Ella suddenly perks up. "The guilty will all hang once this book is published," she booms.

Concerning the new alleged conspiracy to kill Farrakhan, Rodnell and Ella Collins seem to be in shock. They believe that Qubilah was



ILLUSTRATIONS BY JARRETT HUDDLESTON

entrapped by the same government agencies that they think were actively involved in Malcolm's death. Rodnell says that people should look very closely at the relationship between the government's informer, Michael Fitzpatrick, and Qubilah. "They have known each other for a long time, and there is much more there than meets the eye," Rodnell says. Of the women in his family, he says, "We are talking here about a group of women who have never cried. My mother, Malcolm's daughters . . . They are carrying a terrible load. When the government and the press create these ridiculous stories, it only serves to reawaken and intensify their grief. These women should be left alone, so that they can live their own lives."

"SHE'S FUNNY! SHE'S REAL!"

"JOAN RIVERS is giving a seminar?" said the man standing in the lobby of the Crowne Plaza in White Plains last Tuesday evening. He gazed at an army of suburban women storming through the ballroom doors. "So what's it about?" he asked one woman as she hurried past.

"It's a 'You Deserve to Be Happy' seminar," she told him.

"*Oh,*" he said, pretending to get it. "Oh, *right.*"

Indeed, it was so. Ms. Rivers, fresh from two similar gigs, in Minneapolis and Cherry Hill, New Jersey, was scheduled to give an hour-and-a-half-long inspirational disquisition on how she "got through shit—twice." Having coped with the suicide of her husband, Edgar, and a major career crisis in the late eighties, only to find herself once more "in the toilet, careerwise," just last year, Rivers has been fine-tuning her survival strategies for some time. The seminar tour is a recent idea, however. "I'm hoping it will turn into something more definite—at the moment, it's a nonprofit thing," she explained a few days before the White Plains date. "Everybody is unhappy. Everyone is scared about something. There's a time when we've all got to say, 'Who cares what happened in my childhood? I'm sixty-one, for Christ's sake—it's time to get over it.' "

The four hundred or so women who had come to the Crowne Plaza brought

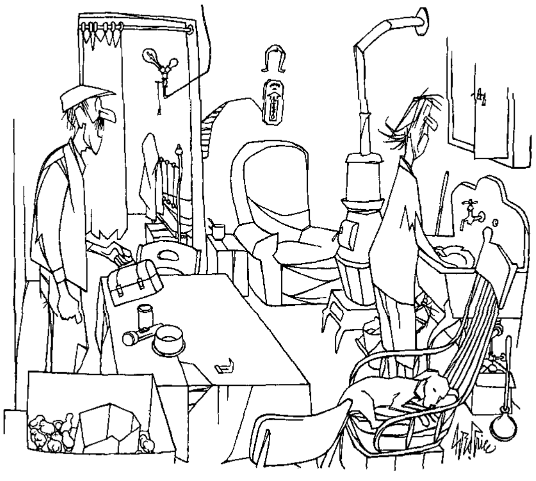
POSTSCRIPT

GEORGE PRICE

GEORGE PRICE, who died on January 12th, at the age of ninety-three, was a member of the remarkable generation of *New Yorker* cartoonists—among them Helen Hokinson, James Thurber, Peter Arno, and William Steig—who, between 1925 and 1935, reinvented American comic art. His happily rendered portraits of lowlifes, harridans, and sourballs added a distinctive, egalitarian note to the magazine's comic drawings, which up to that point had largely focussed on the diversions and rituals of the upper crust. Price's chosen terrain was proudly, even defiantly, lower crust. He claimed that his oddball repertory company was based on memories of his eccentric neighbors in his home hamlet of Coytesville, New Jersey (pop. 400). His father (a carpenter) and his mother (a seamstress) were both employed in the fledgling movie business, which was then establishing a beachhead in nearby Fort Lee.

Another neighborhood resource for the young Price was the painter George Hart, in whose studio Price came to meet such stimulatingly diverse artists as George Herriman and Diego Rivera. Hart encouraged Price's fondness for the offbeat and the picturesque by inviting him along on sketching trips to the crowded public picnic grounds at the foot of the Palisades or, across the river, the steamier corners of Hell's Kitchen. Price's first submissions to *The New Yorker* were based on these sketches, and were published in 1929 as spot drawings.

Price, claiming that he was not an "idea" person, was reluctant to attempt the leap from illustrator to cartoonist, but he was prodded by the resourceful editor Katharine S. White, who assured him that the magazine would keep him supplied with ideas. Never was a promise better fulfilled: of the twelve-hundred-odd "Geo. Price"-signed drawings that he created for the magazine, only one, amazingly, was based on an idea of his own—it appeared as the cover of the December 25, 1965, issue and showed a covey of frayed, ill-cast street Santas riding the I.R.T. It is a sign of Price's genius that he could transform such a mass of other people's gags and roughs into a life's work of absolutely original, instantly identifiable art. On paper, the Pricean line was whiplike and beautifully finished; when lasers came along, they at last provided an image that befitted such exactitude. His drawings were elegantly composed, and featured an obsessive and hilarious attention to detail. Who else could make a barstool or the back of a TV set funny? Frank Modell, a long-term colleague, once remarked that Price's rendering of a tenement boiler room could have served as a blueprint for an apprentice plumber.—LEE LORENZ



"I heard a bit of good news today. We shall pass this way but once."

FROM THE NEW YORKER, APRIL 14, 1973

with them an impressive array of misery and bad luck. "My brother killed himself six months ago," said a woman sipping white wine in the bar before the seminar. "That's terrible," another woman said. "My husband is paralyzed from the waist down, and I just lost my job." But at seven-fifteen, when Rivers arrived at the lectern, looking like a very glamorous Pekingese, in a hot-red suit and one of her QVC brooches—a spray of ruby-red cherries with crystal leaves—all griefs were temporarily forgotten. "She's funny! She's real!" a woman in the third row muttered dreamily as Rivers showed the audience the hole in her Donna Karan stockings.

Rivers went on to assure the women that they were victors, not victims. "Our ancestors came to this country *because* they were victors," she insisted. "They were all peasants who said, 'Ach, I'm sick of this czar—I'm getting outta here!' " Everyone's grief was valid, she said, except Princess Diana's. ("Oh *please!* The woman had money, fame, two great-looking kids, and a husband who *didn't* want to sleep with her.") But the most important thing was to keep moving forward. Then she offered nine major tips for dealing with disaster, including recognizing your grief, getting

FREE ADVICE

Five historians comment on Hillary's dilemma.

Anne Hollander (*author of "Sex & Suits"*)

As First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy suffered no criticism of her changing hair styles, because she had no problem with the idea of making those changes. If Mrs. Clinton can develop that confidence, she can modify her image as often as she likes. If not, the effort is doomed. Right now, we feel that she is not free. Her eye is stunted, and she can't see herself. She follows what she thinks will work. She hasn't a real desire to visualize and revisualize her looks—she seems to think that the effort shouldn't matter. The fact is, image and essence go together. We are complete visual objects. We can't help being seen.

•

Simon Schama (*author of "Citizens"*)

After Napoleon and Josephine ceased to be seriously man and wife, his ambition was to turn her into dynastic material. So he turned on the propaganda machine to build her up. The great portrait of his coronation is really about him crowning Josephine. In that sense, Jacques-Louis David was the most successful makeover artist of his time. Art—or television—can't help Mrs. Clinton. Haunting the West is the ancient myth of women as swallowers of virile men. In the White House, the choice is to be the dutiful reflection of the husband's virtue or to devour the husband's strength. And this Delilah image is so deeply rooted that it's incredibly difficult to transcend. The real problem is the twentieth-century obsession with the President as family man. The photo opportunity for politicians, their loving, loyal family gathered about them, is one of the most powerful lies about the real nature of contemporary power and society.

•

Edmund Morris (*author of "The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt"*)

Nancy Reagan managed to change her image radically a year after her husband became President by confronting head on the idea that she was a spoiled, rich apologist for the élite. She did it at the Gridiron Club dinner, when she performed for the press as Second Hand Rose. It's one of the few recent examples in White House history of a successful image change.

The American people want to feel that there's a human in the White House, not a political technocrat. If the public person can perceive herself humorously, that can make a difference. I don't think Hillary Clinton has ever been famous for her sense of humor.

Robert Darnton (*author of "The Great Cat Massacre"*)

One connection between pre-revolutionary France and present-day America is that people reduce issues to personalities. In France, people actually thought they understood the political process by hating the Queen and convincing themselves that Louis XVI, a sweet bumbler, was a despot. And now, in America, we make decisions about complex issues by asking ourselves, "Do I like Bill and Hillary?" It's hard to have a political conversation with anyone—college professors included—without hearing someone's chemical reaction to the Clintons. It's easy for a professor to tell Mrs. Clinton to study history. But it's not as if Mrs. Clinton could say to herself, "Don't make me Du Barry or, worse, Marie Antoinette." She could easily be pushed into the mythological role of the éminence grise—this process of folklorization is deep. No mere change in imagery will stop it. But some self-consciousness may alleviate it: it doesn't follow that you automatically become a victim. Some sophistication about how words can play into a script not of her devising would help. If the folklore could be manipulated—if someone else can be demonized—she might just slip out of this typecasting. But I don't see any way that she can cast herself in another role by making various gestures. There's too deep and too strong a force at work.

•

Doris Kearns Goodwin (*author of "No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt"*)

Eleanor Roosevelt broke one precedent after another. She was the first First Lady to hold press conferences, to testify before committees, to write a daily column, to fly in a plane. And there was a backlash. But she was consistent: she didn't take an inside policymaker role. She travelled the country and was a voice for people who didn't have access to Washington. And after a while people respected her greatly.

Eleanor's experience suggests that it's better for the First Lady to play other roles than insider. That way, you build a constituency. From the moment Hillary took a policy role, I was anxious for her. There's always a shorthand image for public figures: L.B.J. showing his scar, Ford's clumsiness. For Mrs. Clinton, it's telling Congress what to do. It's hard to transform shorthand. But it can be done. What's still possible for her is to go around the country and listen. She might organize the trip around children's issues—that is her strength. But if she tries merely to shift her image and be a traditional First Lady, she'll lose all the people who supported her precisely because she is a modern woman. It's not about becoming Barbara Bush.—Jesse Kornbluth into therapy, making a list of the terrible things in your life and then making a list of your blessings. "Life is a movie and you're the star," she said, in summing up the first half of the session. "Give it a happy ending."

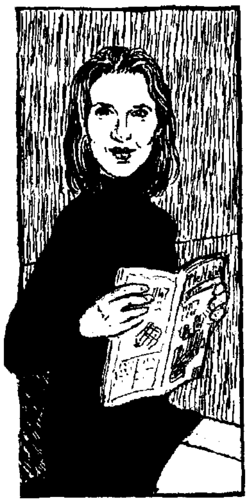
During the intermission, the women stood around discussing the Rivers philosophy. Mostly, they were approving. "That stuff she said about not fearing rejection?" one woman said. "I sell for a living, and that really spoke to me."

"The woman has balls!" announced another woman, who had come from New Rochelle for the evening. In the line for the bathroom, skepticism reared its pretty head for a moment—"So I guess she'll be making this into a book soon, and then audiotapes and then a video," one woman said, leaning her head against a cubicle door—but it was quickly pushed down. "That's right! That's good!" said a woman with carmine hair and big earrings. "Joan's an American!"

A Q. & A. session followed. One woman wanted to know what she should do now that her husband had left her and her seven-year-old child for another woman. "Son of a bitch!" Rivers cried, to rapturous applause. "Now move on. *Move on.* And don't take the piece of filth back!" She paused a moment, thinking. "*Unless,*" she added, holding up one perfectly manicured talon, "you get everything in your name."

VANDEN HEUVEL FACES THE NATION

Katrina vanden Heuvel could be the main character in a big, hot novel by Judith Krantz. First, there's her name, a trash-fiction heroine's handle if there ever was one. Then there are her legs, which have caused her to be described in both *Esquire* and *W* as a "babe." Then there's her husband, the Princeton Russian-politics and history professor Stephen Cohen, who, at fifty-six, is twenty-one years older than she is. Then there's her grandfather (Jules Stein), a struggling Jewish immigrant who, through the sheer force of his indomitable will, created a Hollywood entertainment empire (M.C.A.) that was sold to the Japanese a few years ago for a little over six billion bucks. Then there are the people who used to come over to watch movies with her when she was growing up, among them Cary Grant and Alfred Hitchcock. Then there's the fact that in 1978, while she was flying to Switzerland to visit her father (who was the United States ambassador to the United Nations offices there and a former Justice Department assistant to Robert F. Kennedy), her plane was hijacked by a guy in the row behind her, who was seeking freedom for Rudolf Hess. And then there's the fact that when America's oldest and most newsprintish journal of liberal opinion began to seem somewhat out of it the job of redefining it for a new generation of left-leaning readers was given to her. If you were Judith Krantz's editor, you would shake your head as you thumbed through the manuscript, thinking, No, no, Judy—this time you've gone too far.



But Katrina vanden Heuvel is a real person, and last week she became both the editor and a part owner of *The Nation*, where she has worked on and off since her undergraduate days, at Princeton. (*The Nation* isn't the only magazine in the family portfolio. Vanden Heuvel's mother, Jean Stein, whose parties are famously well stocked with literary types, publishes and edits *Grand Street.*)

Over the past year, vanden Heuvel served as *The Nation's* acting editor, filling in for the affable, balding, nonbabe Victor Navasky, who has stepped up to the job of publisher and editorial director and is hatching various entrepreneurial schemes, including a CD-ROM project dealing with the history of *The Nation*, and a Nationmobile, which will crisscross the country visiting bookstores and newsstands and stirring up interest in the magazine. He and vanden Heuvel and several other investors, including Paul Newman and E. L. Doctorow (another inimitably Krantzian touch), recently bought the magazine from the gentleman publisher Arthur Carter.

As of this writing, vanden Heuvel is in Moscow, where she and her husband and their three-year-old daughter are paying one of their regular visits. She is hoping to report on fallout from the war in Chechnya. "We're also here partly for a vacation, if you can believe that," she said by phone. "But it's actually very quiet in Moscow now."

Vanden Heuvel also wanted to be in Moscow for a party celebrating the publication of a Russian edition of Betty Friedan's feminist classic, "The Feminine Mystique." Russian men make their American counterparts seem almost as highly evolved as Montel Williams, she said, and Russian women need all the support they can get. The Friedan translation is a joint venture between vanden Heuvel and a Russian publishing house called Progress. Also in the works is a Russian edition of "Our Bodies, Ourselves."

Vanden Heuvel did *not* go to Russia to escape the hubbub following the announcement of her new job, although she said that leaving the country in such a situation would have been a typically Russian response. "Or going to a sanatorium, if events get too difficult," she said. When she returns to New York, at the end of the month, she will face the huge but pleasant task of attempting to lead the liberal countercharge against the forces of Newt Gingrich. "I think it's a great opportunity to make the magazine the voice of the liberal-left community in America," she said. "I would like *The Nation* to be more populist, in the best sense of the word, and harder-edged at the same time. We'll have more investigative reporting, and different kinds of features, and maybe a fresher, sharper, bolder look—not only in terms of graphics but also in terms of style and content."

Here in New York, Navasky said that vanden Heuvel had been, for him, the only candidate for his old job. "All I had to do was persuade her to stay and keep on doing what she was doing," he said. Indeed, there are those who will argue that vanden Heuvel was such an obvious choice for the editor's job that, if this were a novel, readers would have seen her appointment coming from almost the very first page. ♦

This week's contributors: Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Zoë Heller, David Owen.

THE ART WORLD

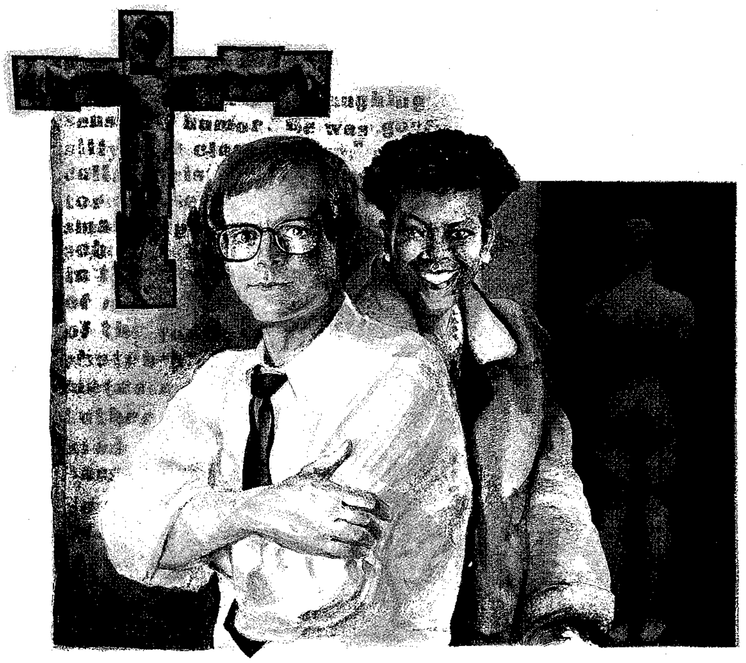
THE STRADDLER

Peter Norton is a software tycoon who likes being an outsider, but he's breaking down barriers as one of America's most unusual art patrons.

BY DAVID OWEN

WHEN Peter Norton was in his late twenties, a little over twenty years ago, he gradually realized, in an experience that he imagines was similar to the discovery that one is gay, that he was powerfully attracted to black women. Norton is white. "I treated it as a sexual preference," he told me not long ago. "Once I noticed it, I decided to run with it: O.K., you're attracted to black women; all right, that's it, you'll date black women." As he told me this, we were walking through SoHo, paying quick visits to a dozen art galleries that he had marked on a small, photocopied map. He walked briskly and seldom lingered, even when he came upon a work of art that he liked. Norton and his wife, Eileen—who is black, and whom he met thirteen years ago, when both placed classified advertisements in the same issue of a Los Angeles singles magazine—are significant collectors of contemporary American art. For several years, they have been included in *ARTnews*'s annual listing of the top two hundred art collectors in the world.

The Nortons are also among the more conspicuous private patrons of contemporary-art exhibitions and events—among them, "Black Male: Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary American Art," which is currently at the Whitney. When the Whitney's director, David A. Ross, was seeking funding for "Black Male," he had a breakfast meeting with Norton at the Mark Hotel, in New York. Ross was worried that the controversial subject of the show might scare away underwriters, and he asked Norton if he would help. Norton said he would fund the entire show, telling Ross, "Now go do something else." "Black Male" ended up receiving additional funding, most notably from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Rockefeller Foundation, but Nor-



Peter and Eileen Norton: "Being a partner in an interracial marriage," Peter says, "means something, doesn't it?"

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ton's early pledge, Ross says, was the key.

It has occasionally been suggested (though not for attribution) that the Nortons have more money than taste when it comes to art, but Norton is unbothered by such criticism. In an interview in the Los Angeles *Times* last year, he said, "I spent my life doing what I'm good at—computer science. It's more interesting to do what I'm not particularly good at, what I must struggle with and may even be incompetent at." Whatever his qualifications, Norton has "a clearly defined purpose" in his art buying and his giving, according to David Ross. That purpose, Ross says, is "to support art that he thinks would not be supported without him." Many of the artists whose work he buys are young and unknown and as yet have no other serious collectors. Norton's family foundation, which last year gave away about a million and a half dollars, also has a reputation for abhorring red tape. Robert Storr, who is a young curator at the Museum of Modern Art and a past recipient of Norton funding, says, "Peter is a maverick. He doesn't follow the standard rules, but he doesn't rub anybody's nose in that fact, and that makes him exciting to deal with. Probably the most original thing he has done is to give a series of fifty-thousand-dollar grants to individual curators and ask them to use the money to buy works for their museums' permanent collections. It is very, very rare for individual curators to have what amounts to discretionary funds, and these grants have made a big difference. Mine enabled me to buy works that would probably never have come to the Modern otherwise."

Norton lives in Santa Monica. On the day we walked through SoHo, he was in town not only to check out the galleries but also to look in on the final preparations for "Black Male." The show has received a great deal of press coverage and a full spectrum of reviews, ranging from the ecstatic to the scathing. (Adam Gopnik, writing in this magazine a few weeks ago, called the show, among other things, "lifeless and academic.") The main part of the exhibition consists of seventy works by twenty-nine mostly young, mostly black artists. There is also, in a sort of adjunct exhibition, a far larger number of films and video works. Among the more arresting pieces in the main part of the show are Adrian Piper's "Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems," which is a large, dark, walk-through installation containing projected images of black faces with an accompanying soundtrack of imagined fearful responses to them, and Lyle Ashton Harris's semi-nude photographic studies of himself.

If the Whitney ever puts on a show called "White Male," the exhibition might include one or two works evoking the subgenre of American Caucasian man which is epitomized by Peter Norton. One can imagine, say, a large ceiling-mounted mobile consisting of a gigantic pair of gold-plated Hush Puppies dangling from a barn-door-size plastic pocket protector. Norton, who is fifty-one, made most of his money in the computer-software business. He has short hair and glasses and looks a little like Anthony Perkins as Norman Bates, in "Psycho." If you have a personal computer, you are probably aware of his most successful creation, a set of imaginative file-and-disk-management programs called the Norton Utilities. (You also probably know what he looks like, since a photograph of him appears on all Norton products.) The most famous of the Utilities is a program called UnErase, which seemingly by magic recovers deleted computer files.

In 1990, Norton sold out to Symantec, a larger software company, for stock that turned out to be worth over three hundred million dollars. Norton and his wife devote the bulk of their energies to raising their two grade-school-age children, buying art, serving on the boards of philanthropic organizations, and giving away money.

LIKE Microsoft's William Gates and a growing number of other relatively young people who practically overnight have built large fortunes in the computer industry, Norton represents a new type of American rich person: the nerd tycoon. Unironic in word and deed, linear in thought, bland in attire, underexposed to sunlight, these modern multimillionaires, however unlikely they may seem as dramatic figures, are a distinct improvement on the more familiar, late-nineteenth-century archetype of American mogul: the ruthless, profligate, trust-building exploiter of labor and natural resources.

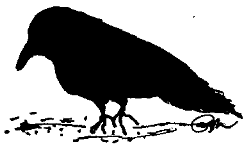
Nerd tycoons differ from robber barons in another way as well. If there had been no such thing as petroleum, John D. Rockefeller would surely have found some other means of becoming stupefyingly wealthy. But if there had been no computers, what would have happened to guys like Gates and Norton? Norton suspects that he might have ended up either as "an angry cab-driver with a Ph.D." or as a paper-shuffling minion of some faceless corporation, much as his father was. The fact that big companies were beginning to use computers at the very moment Norton entered the job market was a hugely propitious accident for him—like becoming a teen-ager in the year they invented French-kissing. The world transformed itself, and Norton discovered that he possessed not only skills but also a pattern of thinking for which there suddenly existed a lucrative purpose. Like a lot of other shy, wonky guys, who a decade earlier might have drifted (by way of the chess team and the calculus club) into the dustier corners of the American economy, he now found himself at capitalism's cutting edge.

Fabulous wealth has not erased Norton's nerd roots; they continue to shape, among other things, his sense of humor, the way he relates to people, the way he dresses, and his taste in art. Withdrawn and friendless as a child, he is still uneasy in the world—and not only, or even mainly, because his money is so squeaky new. Sitting in his office in Santa Monica not long ago, he said, "Almost everything that is interesting about my life involves straddling two communities or two viewpoints. I use the word 'straddling' rather than 'bridging,' because 'bridging' suggests a useful conduit. I wouldn't claim that most of what I do constitutes a useful conduit. And that is certainly not how I experience my life—it's not how it feels, emotionally, for me. 'Straddling' suggests a certain discomfort, a certain sense of falling in between. To change the metaphor slightly, I have spent a lot of my life standing just outside a circle. Everybody has that kind of experience, but I think I have had it more than most, and only lately has it dawned on me that my most common posture in life is to be just outside two related but opposing circles—for example, the white world and the black world. Occasionally I become a bridge, a message-carrier back and forth. But I never belong, I am never an insider in any way. That's what my life is about."

"Is there no world in which you feel comfortable?" I asked.

"No. No. I have never felt at home anywhere. Never."

UNTIL a few weeks ago, Norton and his family lived in an enormous house that had a tennis court, a swimming pool, a gift-wrapping room, and a drop-dead view of Santa Monica Canyon and the Riviera Country Club. Outside, in a corner of the patio near the swimming pool, was a recent art work by Eric Magnuson, called "Trickle"; it was a gold-leaf rendering of a stain the artist had made by urinating in a corner of his studio. Inside the house, in descending order of total volume, were some outsized pieces of furniture, numerous provocative works by mostly young artists, and four relatively inconspicuous Nortons. The Nortons bought the house a few years ago at what they felt was an irresistible price—the previous owner had had to sell after becoming mired in financial difficulties, to which the construction of the house had contributed—and decided to see if they could stand to live in it. Not long ago, they decided they could not. They have now moved to a very nice but far more modest house in a very nice but far more modest neighborhood about a mile away. Norton says that one of the strongest bonds between him and his wife is a powerful shared sense of middle-class values, and neither of them ever felt at home in the big house. Nonetheless, the house was very useful as a setting for parties.



Shortly before they moved, the Nortons gave a large party to help generate support in Los Angeles for "Black Male," which will move in March from the Whitney and in April open at U.C.L.A. at the Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, in Westwood. The party was like many parties at the Nortons', and strikingly unlike most parties in similar homes in the United States: most of the two hundred guests were black. Among them were artists, art collectors, academics, business executives, doctors, lawyers, and people in the entertainment industry. It would be a gross exaggeration to say that these people are Norton's friends—as near as I can tell, he has no intimate friends outside his family, and he avoids socializing on almost any scale—but they can probably be called his milieu. He was tieless and wearing his version of party attire, a dark vest that he described to me as "festive."

The main event of the Nortons' cocktail party was a slide-and-video presentation drawn from "Black Male." The presentation was narrated by the exhibition's curator, a twenty-nine-year-old black woman named Thelma Golden. She was introduced by Henry Hopkins, who is the director of the Hammer museum and the chairman of the art department of the University of California at Los Angeles, and by Norton himself, who called her "the hero of the show." When the presentation was over, Golden asked for questions. There were several perfunctory ones of the where-did-you-get-the-idea-for-this-show variety. Then Wendell Collins, an older black man who runs a printmaking workshop in Los Angeles, spoke up from one side of the room.

"I have been trying to be patient, but my heart keeps trying to pound itself outside my chest," he said. "As I looked at these slides, I said to myself that they look like suitably framed artifacts from a death camp, framed by the victor to commemorate a victory. As a black man—and I have been one for a long time—I don't like this show. I think it is arrogant and offensive. I think it is a celebration of white supremacy."

There were a few low murmurs of agreement.

"I think we need to do a show on white men," Collins continued, in a slow, even, simmering voice, "with the same intensity and with the same magnifying eye. This is a *horrible* show. I see nothing that celebrates any manhood or any humanity in black men. Is this what you intended to do, my dear lady?"

Golden seemed somewhat shaken, but she tersely defended her show, as she had already had to do on more than a few occasions in New York. She restated several themes that she had earlier addressed in the show's catalogue, in which she described "Black Male" as a study of "the highly charged, often conflicted presence of African-American men in American culture." Several more speakers, all black, raised objections to the show, and several others, both black and white, spoke in support of it. A black man said that heightened racial tensions in Los Angeles since the 1992 riots would shape the interpretation of the show. Henry Hopkins, who is white, said that, whatever one felt about the content of the show, it was nonetheless the most important art exhibition ever curated by a young black woman in this country. There was a distinct generational divide in the discussion: those who defended the show tended to be young; those who spoke against it tended to be middle-aged or older. The debate never reached the level of an argument, but it got quite lively. At a particularly contentious moment, Norton took the microphone and said, "Thank you very much. At this point, I would like to invite everyone to continue the discussion on an individual basis." The discussion was still going strong when I left, around nine-thirty.

The next day, I asked Norton how he felt about the reaction to Golden's presentation. He said, "I think a lot of what we heard last night was the members of an older generation in effect pulling up their shirts and saying, 'I've got a very old scar here, and another here, and there's a wound over here that hasn't healed, and this show doesn't acknowledge that.' Well, on a purely personal level, that is a legitimate thing for people to mouth off about. But on a larger level it's absurd, it's childish, and it has nothing to do with what the show is about. The job of the older generation is to go out and hack a path through the underbrush so that we can walk over their dead bodies. In a snapshot of time, we may look as though we're exploiting them, but the generation that follows us will do the same thing to us. I think it was a very useful party—more useful than I expected. Being relatively nonsocial, I can never understand what the point of these things is, or how they do any good, but in fact they do. Some of it is just allowing people to let off steam, so that months from now they won't feel they never had a chance to."

NORTON was born in Aberdeen, Washington, in 1943 and grew up in Seattle. His family, he says, was "middle-class trying to be upper-middle-class," and his parents had "an Ozzie and

Harriet" marriage, although they divorced when he was in college. He has a brother, two years older, who was athletic and popular and in almost all ways entirely unlike him. (The brother now works as a construction project manager for the Eugene, Oregon, school district.) As a child, Norton was reclusive and lonely. He and his brother had virtually no relationship, and he had very few friends. His two favorite activities were reading science fiction and riding his bicycle, alone, for hours at a stretch, with no destination in mind.

Norton attended Reed College, in Portland, Oregon, where he majored in math and physics. During the summer following his sophomore year, in 1963, he got a job crunching numbers for an actuarial company. He was given a sort of glorified adding machine and was asked to do things like calculate how much money a client company should set aside for its pension plan that year. The following summer, he returned to the same job, but found that it had changed. The company had just bought an I.B.M. 1620 computer, one of the first models to be widely used by businesses. It was the size of a desk and had roughly the computing power of an Apple II. His boss handed him the manual and told him to figure out how to program the thing. Almost immediately, Norton felt that he had been given the key to a new life.

"The 1620 was from the pre-interrupt generation of machines," Norton says. "That means that when anything went wrong, the whole thing just stopped. You had to manually twiddle dials and read flashing lights in order to figure out what the problem was before you could go on. A very tedious task. But it turned out, because of the peculiarities of this particular machine, that nineteen times out of twenty the error was more or less the same damn thing. Category mistake. So I wrote a little program that would sneak itself into a part of memory that wasn't being used, and when the machine crashed, my program would track down the information that the programmer would otherwise have to figure out from the dials and the flashing lights, and print it out."

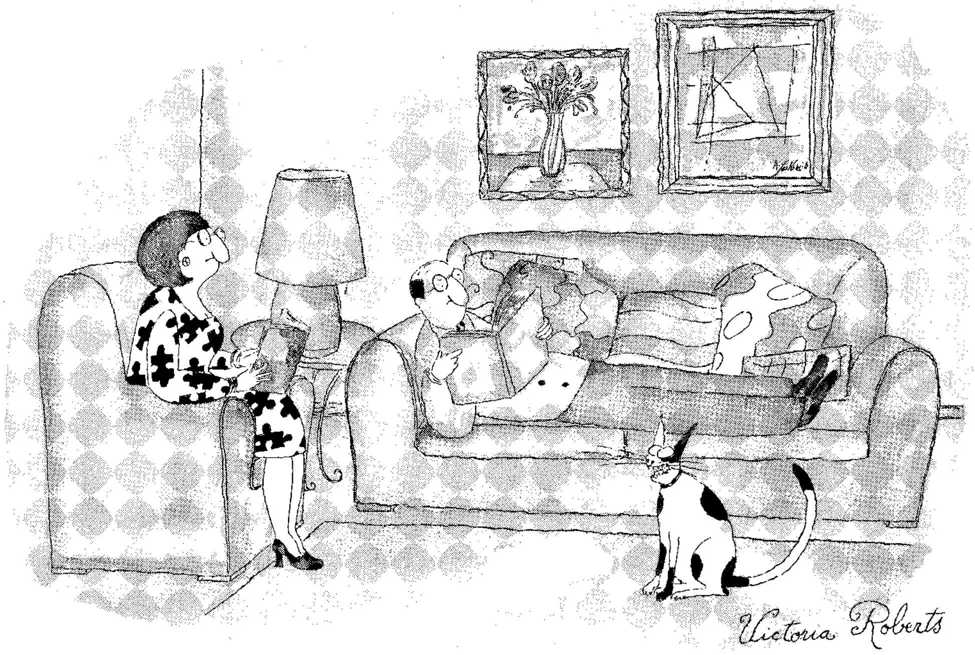
This was, in effect, the first Norton Utility. Norton gave his program to anyone who wanted it, and received fan letters from as far away as Argentina. The program offered a neat solution to a common problem, and Norton had found a calling.

Norton's college years were otherwise not especially satisfying. Talking about them over lunch in New York one day, he said, "I did something really dumb right off the bat. I took on too heavy a course load, so immediately I was floundering. I loved Reed for its rebellious atmosphere and its championing of the intellect and its demanding courses and all that, but I didn't really know how to make myself fit in. Basically, I made a mess of my college years. I made friends, but not as many and not as deep as would have been really good for me. I dated and had affairs, but, like, not enough. I was by no means Super Nerd. I went on bicycle camping trips with two guys and a folding tent, and I hung out with people, and I went to beer parties—all the sort of good things that a college student ought to be doing. But it kind of didn't work for me. I didn't come out of it with this sense of having had the rich experience that I should have had."

Norton's assessment of his collegiate social life is characteristic—simultaneously plaintive and detached. His use of the slightly stodgy word "affairs" and his chilly, analytical tone are also very much like him. Precisely what he was like in college is hard to say. He keeps in touch with virtually no one from those years—or, for that matter, from almost any other years. At any rate, midway through his senior year he dropped out. (He eventually got a B.A. in math from Berkeley, in 1969.)

After Reed, Norton got a job at Boeing, as a sort of junior engineer. In 1965, as American involvement in the Vietnam War was accelerating, he was drafted. He was inducted into the Army as a conscientious objector, and he trained to become a noncombatant medical corpsman. The Army had a shortage of medical instructors at the time, and as soon as Norton had finished his training he was put to work teaching what he had just learned to new draftees. He discovered that he was a natural pedagogue, and he spent the rest of his two-year service as a teacher.

After the Army, Norton had a number of computer-related jobs. He told me that in those years he suffered from what was by now a familiar feeling of not belonging. He had been too young to tumble naturally into the bohemian dissipation of the beatnik era, and now he was too old to tumble naturally into the bohemian dissipation of the hippie era. He felt an inner longing that eventually expressed itself as an interest in Zen



"I need some answers, people."

Buddhism. He read books by Alan Watts and D. T. Suzuki, and began hanging out at zendos in the San Francisco area. In 1971, he shaved his head and became a monk at a new Buddhist monastery near Mt. Shasta.

"I began with a sense of great enthusiasm," Norton told me. "When I went to the monastery, I had this illusion that come the next year divisible by four I would not know who my President was. Well, in fact, we weren't that isolated, and we knew about Watergate, which unfolded during those years. But I did all the normal Zen monastic stuff. I meditated, milked cows, herded goats, sewed clothes, built septic tanks, and all that. Then, after three and a half or four years, it started to go sour for me. I became increasingly unhappy with my lack of spiritual progress, and increasingly uncomfortable with what I felt was kind of a cult of personality. The monastery wasn't turning into a suicide cult or anything, but it also wasn't turning out to be the orthodox Buddhist monastery that I had expected it to be. So I left—essentially dropped out, more or less as I had at Reed. There are two ways to leave something in bad grace. Either you leave saying, 'Those rotten bastards!' or you leave saying, 'Oh, what a failure I am.' I am an internalizer, so I left there feeling that I was a failure."

Suddenly back in the job market, Norton found himself with obsolete technical skills and a résumé that was five years out of date. The computer world was growing at a feverish pace, however, and the need for programmers was acute. He drove to Los Angeles, checked into a motel, and within ten days got a job at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, in Pasadena, where he worked on a small piece of a big program that was used to manage data collected on various space missions.

Norton held a succession of similar jobs over the next eighteen months. He enjoyed the work, but he still felt restless. He had never travelled much, and as soon as he had saved enough money to bankroll a trip around the world, he quit. "I was thirty-five, but I took the kind of trip that twenty-five-year-olds do," he says. "I had a Eurail Pass, and I stayed in hostels, and all that. Before leaving, I made a list of something like three hundred cultural sites I wanted to visit: the cathedral in Milan, the Aswân High Dam. I was gone for a year. When I got back to L.A., I didn't know what I wanted to do."

Norton was nearing middle age, and he was beginning to grow nervous about his career path—he didn't want to become a manager or a vice-president. He briefly tried working as a freelance computer programmer, but he hated having to sell himself to clients. Then, in the late summer of 1981, I.B.M. introduced its Personal Computer, a machine that, for all its many limitations, represented a major step forward in the world of small computers. Norton bought one and, mainly for his own amusement, began writing programs for it. One of his programs was an early version of UnErase, the utility that restores deleted files. (UnErase takes advantage of the fact that a PC doesn't physically erase a file when you delete it. Instead, the computer does the equivalent of forgetting where the file is stored. UnErase uses various internal clues to figure out where the file is, then brings it back onto the screen.) At first, Norton sold his programs by word of mouth and through small ads on the back of a newsletter that he wrote and distributed free in nationwide computer stores. His company grew slowly though steadily for a couple of years, then took off.

An important reason for Norton's success was that he was a very shrewd marketer. Sensing that fledgling computer users were scared of their machines and intimidated by the techies who dominated the business, he was determined to take a different approach. "When I was starting my company, I looked around and noticed that small startup software companies tended to give themselves one of two kinds of names, both of which appalled me," he says. "An example of the first kind of name is Intergalactic Digital Research—a real company that actually went on to become a famous and halfway important company, now called simply Digital Research. But what did the original name communicate to potential customers? Sophomoric. The other tendency was to call a small company something equivalent to International Business Machines Corporation—a big, important-sounding name that was intended to hide the fact that this was really just two guys in a garage. I didn't like the hypocrisy of that." Norton decided to give his company a personal, unthreatening name—Peter Norton Computing Inc.—and to put a reassuring photograph of himself on all his products.

In these photographs, Norton strikes a pose that is calculated to communicate competence, accessibility, and reassurance: no jacket, tie loosened, sleeves rolled up, arms crossed, comforting smile. He looks confident, approachable, eager to help. In addition to writing programs, Norton has also written books—among them "Inside the I.B.M. PC"—which remain models of expository clarity. Norton's great strength as a teacher is that, unlike the vast majority of other people writing about computers, he combines technical expertise with an ability to imagine what it must be like to know nothing at all. His books are clear and helpful without being condescending.

Norton's success at creating such a potently sympathetic persona for his company seems especially striking when you consider that in person he tends to be shy, chilly, brusque, impatient, and withdrawn. As a corporate icon, he radiates the kind of social ease that he has seldom managed to pull off in real life. People who have read his books and used his programs sometimes feel as though they know him. But they don't.

SHORTLY before "Black Male" opened in New York, Norton stopped by Thelma Golden's office to say hello.

While they were talking, Norton noticed that the long cord on Golden's phone had become extraordinarily tangled, so he unclipped it from the receiver and spent several minutes straightening it out. I would be tempted to find something psychologically meaningful in this, except that I had been just about to do the same thing myself. Norton and Golden talked about the final preparations for "Black Male," and about arrangements for a fancy dinner that was going to be held at the Whitney in conjunction with the opening. Golden (like Lorna Simpson) is a member of Norton's favorite category of human being, and his conversation with her was lengthy and animated. At one point, while they were discussing the dinner, Norton turned to me and said, "Generally, I don't believe that a show's underwriters should in any way interfere with the show, but I did give Thelma one clear set of instructions with regard to the party. Would you like to quote me, Thelma?"

"You said that this event had to be very 'colored,' " she said.

"No," Norton said. "That wasn't the way I put it."

"How did you put it?" Golden asked. "That's how I took it, so that's what I did."

"I said, 'Let's show these Upper East Side types that colored people know how to party.' "

"Exactly," Golden said. "And they are definitely going to party."

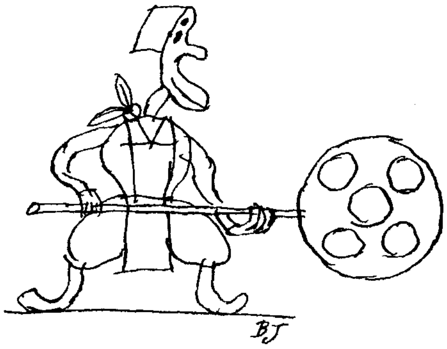
When Norton talks in this vein, as he does fairly often, I find it slightly unsettling. Earlier in the conversation, he had used the word " 'tude" a couple of times, and after that he had mentioned a black academic who, he said, "doesn't show much soul when he's around me." I was reminded of a dinnertime conversation in my family in the early seventies, when my father used the word "hassle" and my teen-age sister, appalled, said, "Dad! Don't use modern terms!"

Over and over in his life, Norton has placed himself in situations where he has seemed as conspicuously out of place as he does when he talks about 'tude. I began to wonder if he unconsciously adopts this outsider role in order to camouflage a far deeper feeling of not belonging. Because he feels he doesn't fit in, he takes positions in which not fitting in seems a part of the package. The pattern is repeated everywhere: as a philanthropist, he favors either non-mainstream projects or risky, controversial projects in mainstream museums (a category into which "Black Male" falls); as an art buyer, he concentrates on the works of the young and unknown; he is the white partner in a mixed marriage; he and his family spend a large part of each summer in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, on Martha's Vineyard, in a beautiful nineteenth-century house in a prosperous old, traditionally black neighborhood. Even his great new wealth has served as a way of defining distance between himself and others. Encased in acrylic plastic on a coffee table in the sunroom of his Santa Monica house was a cancelled personal check to the Internal Revenue Service in the amount of five million dollars—an odd decorating statement that I interpret not as braggadocio but as a sort of declaration of otherness: I had to do this, and you didn't.

Sometimes Norton's declarations of otherness are entirely unambiguous. Back in the late eighties, as Peter Norton Computing was taking off, Norton took part in an innovative management program at the Harvard Business School. The program is designed for entrepreneurs who own growing businesses, and it meets for three weeks during each of three consecutive years. Not long ago, I spoke with Martin Marshall, who was the chairman of the program and one of Norton's professors.

"During the program, Peter stayed at the Charles Hotel," Marshall said. "He did not stay at the business school, as did all the hundred and ten other participants. In fact, of the twenty-two hundred students who have enrolled in the program since it started, Peter is the only one who has elected to stay somewhere else. We have a beautiful dormitory, with suites containing eight bedrooms and a living room. But Peter, for one reason or another, decided to be a loner."

Despite his physical remoteness from his classmates, Norton enjoyed the program and has fond memories of it. "It was enormously useful to me for business reasons, but it was also a transforming experience for me in another way," he told me one afternoon as we were looking at family photographs in his house. "Many men—maybe even most men—at some point in their lives have a male-bonding experience, or even many such experiences, in which they feel a real sense of deep camaraderie with other people. The sports team, or fraternity, or camping trip, or whatever. Well, I had never done that in my life. In fact, I had very much avoided those situations and been kind of repulsed by them and had contempt for them. But at Harvard, just by accident, I had one, and it really was the first. It wasn't all the guys in the class, but still it was classically a male-bonding situation. And because I had never had that experience before, it was much more profound for me than it was for most of the other people. For me, it was an extraordinary taste of what social bonding might be. It's something I'm not built for, and it will probably never happen to me again, but it was quite delightful. I found it kind of like the one time that I went skydiving. It was exhilarating, but I wouldn't do it again."



WALKING me through his house before his cocktail party for "Black Male," Norton took me into a small storage room and showed me a larger-than-life-size black-and-white photograph of a little boy holding a toy truck. The little boy is Norton at the age of four or five. Eileen had had the picture blown up for Norton's fiftieth-birthday party, in 1993. Partly because the photograph is grainy and slightly out of focus, the race of the little boy is not clear.

As we looked at the picture, Norton said, "At the birthday party, one of the guests came up to me and said, 'Peter, I didn't know you were African-American.' I find that really interesting. Who knows if it's true? But to me it's a nice little joke, and it's interesting to contemplate."

During most of our conversations, Norton spoke as though he had in his mind a sort of flowchart or outline of what he wanted to say. He would be talking about an old job of his, for example, and then he would say, "Now, let's set aside the employment/professional/technical thread and pick up another one." It was almost as though he were plucking files from a hard disk in a sort of internal computer.

One day, in Norton's office, we talked about the life thread that he calls "race and romance." I had asked him about his marriage, and whether he knew why he was—to use his own phrase—"sort of race-obsessed." Norton was sitting at his desk, on the wall above which was a large image, by Sarah Charlesworth, of a naked, dancing black woman.

"Part of it has to do with playing out the theme of hetero," he said. "If you're not going to marry the same sex, why marry the same ethnicity? I mean, other than sex itself, why do you want to spend your life in the company of a woman as opposed to a best male friend? Part of the answer has to do with the wonderful, bizarre, inexplicable differences between male psychology and female psychology. Well, in the same vein, why would you want to spend your life with a person from the same ethnic background? You miss the *frisson*."

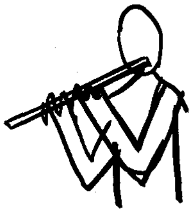
Despite the obvious difference, Peter and Eileen are actually quite similar. Both are distinctly ungregarious. Both had relatively solitary childhoods. (Eileen grew up in Watts, in a household consisting of her mother, a grandfather, and two uncles.) Both are deeply interested in art. Both are involved in a variety of liberal causes. (In April, 1994, they gave a party for California Democrats which was attended by Hillary Clinton, and Eileen is a member of the board of the Children's Defense Fund.) And both resorted to classified ads in searching for a mate.

"There's another important aspect of our relationship," Norton said. "Not everything in life is standing on a soapbox and posturing, yet everything people do in the world has a meaning; it represents a position. Well, being a partner in an interracial marriage and a member of an interracial family means something, doesn't it? I don't quite know what it means, and I won't try to define it, but it's definitely a statement. And I like that. When I realized that I was attracted to black women, I had to decide: am I going to pass on this, or am I going to found my life on it? And I realized that I liked the idea of being in an interracial relationship, and I liked the idea of having kids and helping them through whatever strange quandaries they were going to have. I knew that it was going to be an interesting experience, and I also knew that it was going to have some meaning."

Peter and Eileen met when she was teaching first and second grade, and he was running his company, which was still tiny. Both were having trouble meeting interesting people of the opposite sex. Both had tried classified ads, he more often than she, and both had found most of the resulting encounters mildly unpleasant. Norton can recall only one line from his ad: he said that he would rather vacation on a Greek island than in Hawaii. Two things struck him about Eileen's ad: she said that she was trilingual (English, Spanish, and French) and she said that she was black. Each answered the other's ad. They exchanged letters, then spoke on the phone, then agreed to meet. Their first meeting took place in front of a falafel stand in Westwood.

"During my lunch break the next day, I went to a nearby mall and wandered into a jewelry store and bought an inexpensive string of freshwater pearls—maybe a hundred dollars, maybe two hundred dollars," Norton says. "As I was doing this, I said to myself, 'Wait a second. What's going on here? Why am I buying this woman a not extravagant but certainly unusual and delightful little present—the sort of thing you might do with a girlfriend maybe a month into the relationship?' Why was I doing this the day after the first date? And I said, 'Wait a minute, this is the back of my mind telling the front of my mind something.' " They married two years later.

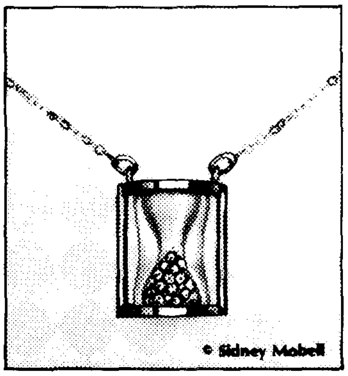
Like her husband, Eileen has spent much of her life outside the circle. Her uncles and her grandfather all had college degrees—one of the uncles had also studied at the Sorbonne—yet all worked as postal clerks, one of the few white-collar occupations open to them. Eileen earned a bachelor's degree in French literature and a graduate degree in education. She taught first and second grade until she felt burned out by the Los Angeles school system, then went to work for Norton, whom she had been dating for a year, and whose company was still small and struggling. For both of them, Peter Norton Computing provided an escape, a way of UnErasing lost and denied opportunities.



WHEN I first met Norton, I found him difficult to like. When he talks with other people, he almost gives the impression that he is pushing them away with both hands, even if he is simultaneously being extraordinarily open about his feelings on some intimate subject. His forthrightness and honesty at times seem almost like strategies for keeping other people away—like preemptive first strikes. As I spent more time with him, though, I began to feel more comfortable around him, perhaps in the same way the crew of the Starship Enterprise gradually felt more comfortable with Mr. Spock. Norton is different from most people, but he has managed, with resourcefulness and determination, to turn those differences into a very interesting life, not to mention a couple of hundred million bucks. For a congenital loner who once dropped out of society almost entirely for five years, he's made a big splash in the world. He has turned his weaknesses into strengths on a major scale, and in ways that sometimes seem kind of heroic. I was especially struck by something he told me about his marriage.

"It used to be that America had a center that was white, and everybody else was on the margins," he said during our last interview. "The people on the margins didn't have power, they didn't become judges, they didn't become city-council members, they didn't run the school boards, they were just out there, sort of like the forgotten people. Well, it's a little different now. If you look around L.A., for example, you see companies that are full of Asian engineers, and Hispanic women managers, and black computer programmers. These are all people who have simply gone about their business, moved on and up, got an education, found jobs, bought homes. They aren't kicking up a ruckus, so it's easy to miss what's going on, but they've fanned out across America, and they're building businesses, and getting tenure, and being successful. The truth is that in some ways it's just not a big deal anymore. There used to be the white center and then just a few recognizable categories of 'other'—the Jews, the blacks, the Hispanics. But now there are hundreds of categories of 'other,' and their numbers and proportion are growing. What happens when they are suddenly a quarter, a third, a half of the voting population? When I was growing up, people didn't make a big deal about acknowledging the difference between, say, Presbyterians and Baptists. Everyone's attitude was, So what? In terms of American public life, it mostly didn't matter whether you were a Methodist or a Lutheran. I think it's getting to be that way about more and more kinds of people. I think there's a whole lot of cultural mixing going on among people who aren't making a stink about it. I sometimes want to pat myself on the back for being the white half of a venturesome interracial marriage. But the truth is, sorry, it's not venturesome, it's old hat, it's no big deal." ♦

Time for Diamonds



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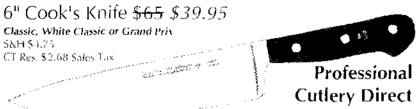

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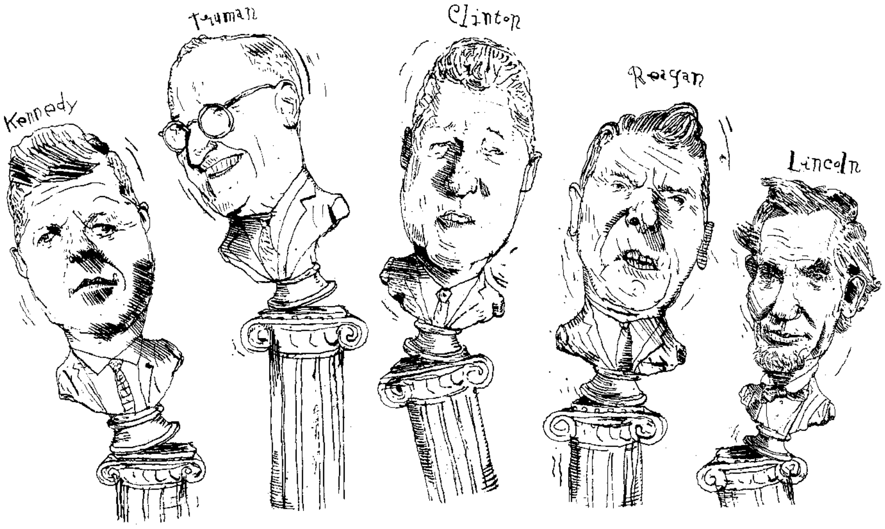
ANNALS OF THE PRESIDENCY

SEVEN WAYS TO WIN FRIENDS

Bill Clinton should take heart: Presidents who are popular in office don't always play out in history—and vice versa.

BY MICHAEL R. BESCHLOSS

LIKE other Presidents whose popularity and reëlection chances have been thrown into jeopardy, Bill Clinton may be thinking more than he did before the 1994 midterm elections about how history will treat his Presidency. As a recent slight upturn in his approval ratings suggests, he may yet tunnel his way to a second term in the White House. But, whatever happens, Clinton may take comfort from the knowledge that if the voters do not restore his fortunes in 1996 historians might.



BARRY BLITT

The mechanics of Presidential-reputation building have never been far from Clinton's mind. Lining the walls of his White House study and the Oval Office anteroom are dozens of Presidential biographies and histories, which he began collecting as a boy. As early as the weekend before his Inauguration, as if to introduce himself to those whose pantheon he hoped to join, Clinton rushed to Thomas Jefferson's Monticello and then bowed his head at John F. Kennedy's grave. Four weeks later, he ran his fingers over artifacts at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, in Hyde Park. During his first year in office, the President vainly encouraged his old friend Taylor Branch, with whom he had co-managed George McGovern's Texas campaign, and who had gone on to write a prize-winning work on Martin Luther King, Jr., to be his Boswell.

As Clinton knows, Presidential historiography is more art than science. Reputations of past leaders are often made and broken by quirk or fashion. Still, it is not impossible to suggest seven rules that help define whether a President ends up on the summit or the slag heap of history.

Rule One: The reputations of past Presidents are endlessly bid up and down on a vast historical stock exchange. This is the opposite of the popular notion that historians see our Presidents in a fixed hierarchy of greatness and mediocrity, ranging from Abraham Lincoln and George Washington at the top to Ulysses Grant and Warren Harding.

Even Washington and Lincoln have had their low moments. No sooner was Washington, for example, transformed into monument than historians began chipping at the granite, questioning his expense accounts, his egalitarian instincts, and his military competence. Sixty-nine years after Lincoln's murder, James G. Randall, of the American Historical Association, demanded that scholars ditch the "hero tradition" in Lincoln scholarship and "turn revisionist." Some did, accusing Lincoln of racism, mishandling law clients, and warmongering. Today, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson are thought to be Presidents of stature. But in the nineteen-twenties, when the words "progressive" and "internationalist" were poison, they were in severe historical decline. One was lampooned as a hyperthyroid case, the other as a dreamy idealist who paid for world schemes with other men's blood.

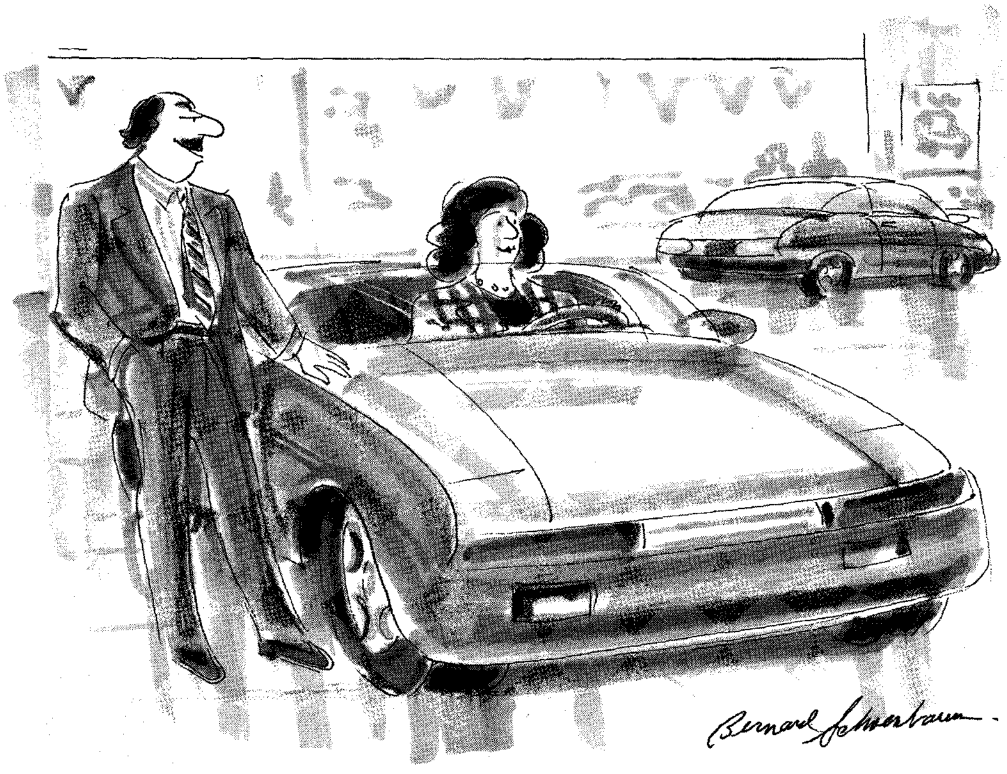
Rule Two: The lantern on the stern allows us to see great (or small) qualities in a President which we could not see when he was in power. Twenty years after Harry Truman left office, scholars gained new respect for his judgment, political fortitude, and knowledge of foreign affairs. To those Truman admirers, hindsight had made it much clearer that H.S.T.'s grand decisions on such issues as war and peace, the bomb, the Middle East, and containment of the Soviet Union had been vindicated—and that he had fought as effectively as any Democrat could have to extend the New Deal.

Rule Three: When a President's private papers are made public, they can turn our image of him upside down. By the late nineteen-seventies, scholars who had once disdained Dwight Eisenhower were startled to discover a dramatic tension between the public and the private Eisenhowers. Racing through freshly opened oral histories, diaries, classified documents, and personal letters, they found that behind the placid, bromidic face that Eisenhower presented to the public was an executive who was intelligent, calculating, profane, manipulative, militantly in control. Fred Greenstein, of Princeton, swiftly dubbed Eisenhower the "hidden-hand" President, winning many converts to the notion that a Machiavellian Ike deliberately concealed his machinations behind a sleepy smoke screen in order to preserve his national support. These discoveries helped to scotch one of the most damaging criticisms of the Eisenhower years—that the tired old soldier was not up to his job.

Rule Four: Historians and the American public do not necessarily share the same tastes in past Presidents. Case in point: Who placed at the top of the most recent Gallup poll asking Americans to name the three greatest Presidents? Lincoln and John Kennedy, in a statistical dead heat. Among serious scholars, even J.F.K.'s acolytes would not dream of placing him alongside Lincoln and above George Washington and Franklin Roosevelt. Kennedy may be a splendid example of how deaf an ear the public can turn to professional historians.

What happened? After Kennedy's murder, the poignant aura of the young man's martyrdom, idealism, and promise was so powerful that even Richard Nixon benefitted: schoolchildren who remembered Nixon's 1960 debates with J.F.K. now thought of him as "President Kennedy's friend." Kennedy's reputation among both the people and scholars was almost unassailable.

Then, in the nineteen-seventies, reacting both to post-assassination hagiography and to new information and hindsight, revisionist historians inveighed against flaws in Kennedy's record on civil rights and the Cold War, his private mores, and his lack of commitment to causes larger than self, driving down his standing on the historical exchange. The seventies were the decade in which revelations about paramours, the mob, and plotting against Fidel Castro pushed Kennedy's memory into the tabloids. One might have expected the public to lose its enchantment with J.F.K. Far from it. As happened with the roguish nineteenth-century Irish nationalist Charles Stewart Parnell, the complexities seem only to have animated and deepened the legend. Kennedy has made the leap into the affections of younger Americans who never knew him.



"Included is a set of scarves by Givenchy."

Testimony to Kennedy's abiding magic with the people is the eagerness of Democrats like Gary Hart, Michael Dukakis, and Bill Clinton to cast themselves as junior J.F.K.s. At the 1992 Democratic Convention, Clinton advisers reverently briefed reporters on how they had unearthed sacred, "undiscovered" movie footage of their boss's 1963 Rosetta-stone meeting with the great man in the White House Rose Garden, and it was shown the night of Clinton's acceptance speech. As both candidate and President, Clinton quoted Kennedy incessantly, and he formed close relations with Kennedy's widow and his youngest brother, Edward. In 1993, at the Kennedy Library, in Boston, he strained hard to draw parallels between himself and Kennedy: "Think of the appeal he made for basic civil rights, and remember that it was just this year that we passed the Motor Voter Act, which was the most important piece of civil-rights legislation passed in a long time."

In his private upstairs White House study, Clinton sits under a framed document (signed by George Clinton, a long-serving eighteenth-century governor of New York) presented to him by Ethel Kennedy's family. In the hallway outside the Oval Office, visible from the J.F.K. desk, at which Clinton presides, the President has hung a photograph of Kennedy. (Bizarrely, it is not a portrait from a happy day; it was snapped by an Arkansas photographer four hours before Kennedy was murdered.)

In contrast, neither Clinton nor any other recent President—Democrat or Republican—has found any percentage in taking up the cause of Dwight Eisenhower. Almost like Kennedy in reverse, Ike is today esteemed by historians, half forgotten by the rest of the country, and virtually ignored by Americans under thirty-five. Those who came of age in the sixties connected Eisenhower less with D Day than with public hawkishness on Vietnam.

Muffled by the understatement that people found so alluring when he was alive, Eisenhower's persona has sent off few echoes since his death, in 1969. With the exception of his grandson David's "Eisenhower: At War" (1986), which benefitted from its author's celebrity, and Stephen Ambrose's magisterial "D-Day" (1994), no book on Ike published since his death has become a national best-seller. (Compare this with Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, or Nixon.) The Eisenhower Centennial, in 1990, was largely ignored.

During ceremonies commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of D Day last June, President Clinton praised Ike's wartime leadership, but that was about all: in Clinton's mind, Eisenhower may loom just as large for his reluctance to integrate Little Rock's Central High School in 1957—one of Clinton's first intense political memories.

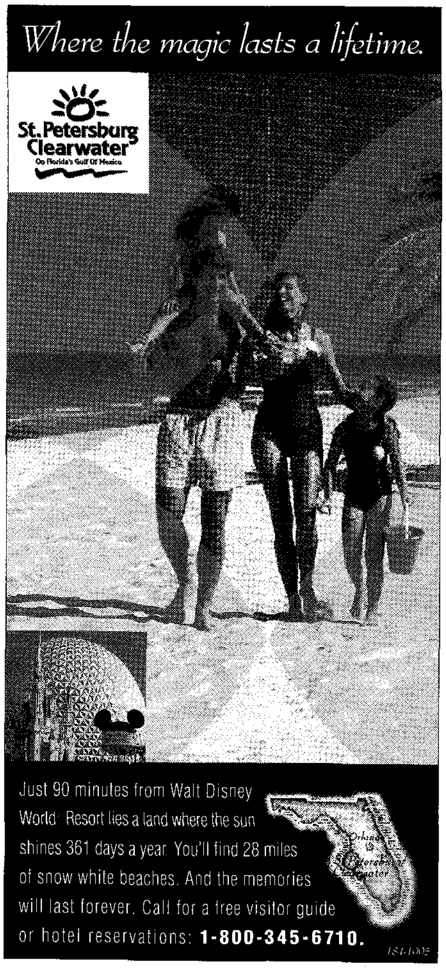
Rule Five: Former Presidents become popular heroes because they satisfy the yearnings of an era. During his last year in office, Harry Truman was anything but the household saint Americans now revere. He was so unpopular (twenty-six-per-cent approval in the Gallup poll) that his handpicked candidate, Adlai Stevenson, treated him as a polecat, conceding that there was a "mess in Washington" and running his campaign from Springfield, Illinois, a world away from Truman's capital. In 1961 and 1962, Truman, grateful that at least someone was interested in his Presidency, submitted to dozens of interviews with the author Merle Miller in the hope that one of the three television networks might broadcast a documentary. None were interested.

At the time, many Americans treated Truman as something of a comic-strip figure—smaller-gauged than Roosevelt, less dignified than Eisenhower, pedestrian in looks and rhetoric compared with Kennedy. Truman did not help himself with cracks about J.F.K.'s Catholicism and about civil-rights leaders, his denunciations of modern painting as "ham-and-eggs art," or his anti-style, conveyed by Hawaiian shirts and two-tone shoes, at a moment when Americans were aping what they presumed to be the moneyed sophistication of the Kennedys.

After an Oval Office visit by Alfred M. Landon, Kennedy pronounced the old Kansas governor "Trumanesque," by which he meant rustic, not heroic. In 1969, President Nixon flew to Independence with a Steinway baby grand that had been in the Truman White House. He played the "Missouri Waltz" (which Truman hated), on a visit whose entire air suggested how gracious it was of him to spend precious time with someone as politically insignificant as Truman.

The reputation of a former President can rise, phoenix fashion, out of the perceived inadequacies of a sitting one. Poetically, it was Nixon and Merle Miller who unwittingly conspired to start Truman's rise to the status of public icon. After Truman's death, in 1972, Miller cut and pasted his interview transcripts to create the book "Plain Speaking." If the volume had been published during the Kennedy era, it would have been sent almost directly to the remainder tables. Instead, it appeared in 1974, during Nixon's Impeachment Summer, enchanting millions of Americans with the notion of a President who paid for his own postage stamps, who seemed to make great Cold War decisions with little regard for polls or political fallout, who was the original Comeback Kid.

Truman's transformation from crank uncle into American folk hero received further assists from James Whitmore's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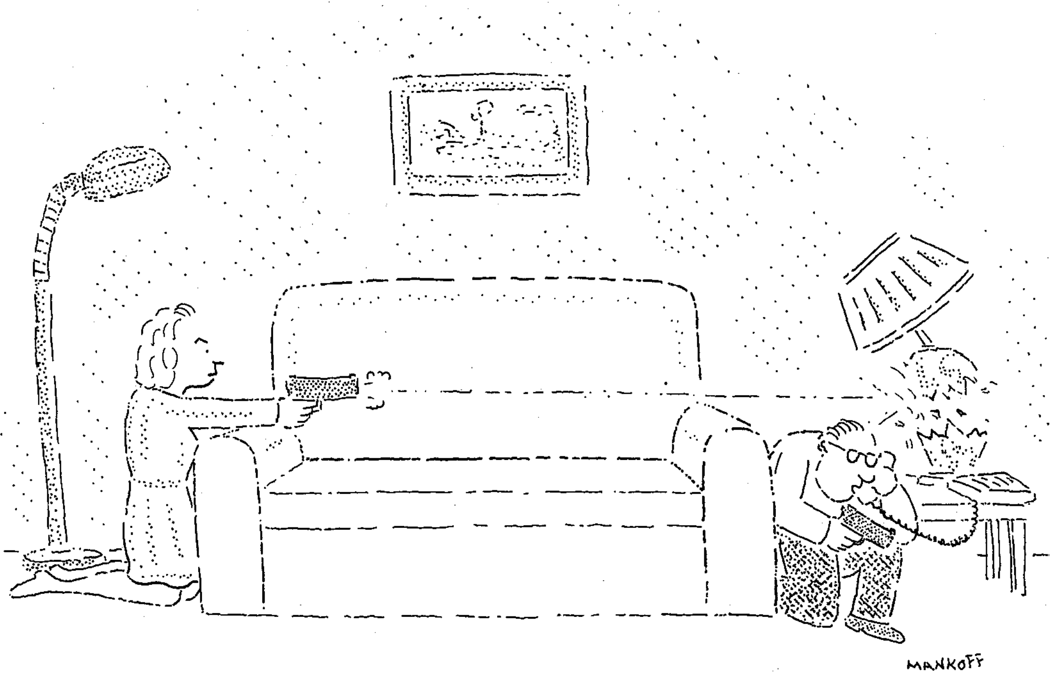

"As a matter of fact, you did catch us at a bad time."

• •

one-man "Give 'Em Hell, Harry!" and the rock group Chicago, whose hit single "Harry Truman" ("America needs you, Harry Truman. Harry, could you please come home?") would have baffled the living Truman. By order of President Gerald Ford, who had campaigned for Thomas Dewey in 1948, Truman's portrait made its first appearance in the Cabinet Room. So intoxicating has been Truman's popular appeal that every major-party Presidential nominee from 1976 on has wrapped himself in the Truman bunting. This has moved Bill Clinton to one-upmanship: "I come from a family that was for [Truman] when he was alive!"

Unless Newt Gingrich and the Republican Congress flame out spectacularly, the new Republican hegemony may continue to revive Ronald Reagan's popularity among Americans to something resembling what it was in 1984, when the Gipper won forty-nine states. Just as David McCullough's heroic 1992 life of H.S.T. has become the manifesto of the Truman cult, a new outbreak of Reagan worship will probably result from Edmund Morris's forthcoming authorized biography of the fortieth President, scheduled for publication next year.

The Reagan era ushered in a revival of the clothing, music, art, architecture, and interior design of the fifties. Similarly, a President Gingrich or Dole might re-create in real life the scene from "Back to the Future Part II" in which nostalgic patrons of a twenty-first-century hangout called Cafe 80's can sit on light-blue stools and shout orders into the good ear of a pompadoured video robot styled to look like the fabled star of "Kings Row."

Rule Six: Living ex-Presidents can campaign for their reputations, but they will have better luck with the public than with historians. For any future President who leaves office under a cloud and wants to save his reputation, Richard Nixon's twenty-year rehabilitation campaign will serve as the gold standard.

A mark of Nixon's success is that, of all people, Bill Clinton—who first campaigned for Congress in 1974 against Nixon's Vietnam policy and Watergate—was the one who demanded at Nixon's funeral that Americans judge the departed not just by scandal but in the context of "his entire life." (Clinton's exculpation of Nixon is all the more extraordinary because during the 1992 campaign he managed to deliver a speech outside the Lyndon Johnson Library, in Austin, Texas, before an audience that included Lady Bird Johnson and other members of Johnson's political family, without making a single mention of the thirty-sixth President of the United States, with whom he might be thought to have slightly more in common politically than with Nixon.)

Nixon spent much of his time during his final years campaigning among journalists and scholars for better treatment by history. This met with only modest success: no recent pro-Nixon volume of history or biography, save his own volumes of memoirs, has won much of an audience.

Far more effective was Nixon's effort to will himself into a pop hero—something that would have been inconceivable in the early nineteen-seventies to such Nixon-era counterculture figures as Country Joe and the Fish or Emile de Antonio (the director of "Millhouse: A White Comedy"). With customary doggedness, Nixon tried to tease out those elements of his life and personality that might contain a hint of popular appeal. Although scholarly views of his diplomacy in Indochina and toward the Soviet Union were, at best, mixed, he succeeded in selling the public on the view that he was a master of foreign policy.

Other aspects of Nixon's campaign for popular appeal were more downmarket. For example, the Nixon Library, in Yorba Linda, California, began selling a Day-Glo T-shirt endowing the ex-President with once unimaginable hipness: Nixon's now notorious Oval Office encounter with the ruffle-shirted, drugged-out Elvis is portrayed above the legend "The President and the King."

Nixon was aware that one of the chief sources of Truman's newfound popularity was that he had never given up in the seemingly hopeless 1948 Presidential race. Noting that Americans were "crazy" about renewal, Nixon wrote what he called his "most personal" book, "In the Arena" (1990), replete with prescriptions on temperance, conversation, recreation ("No one should feel guilty for interrupting his work with a little fun"), tension, privacy, philosophy, and sundry other issues. The book repeated the campaign slogan for Nixon's comeback drive: "Never Give Up." And, indeed, one of the most startling images of the five days between Nixon's death and his funeral was the number of young Americans

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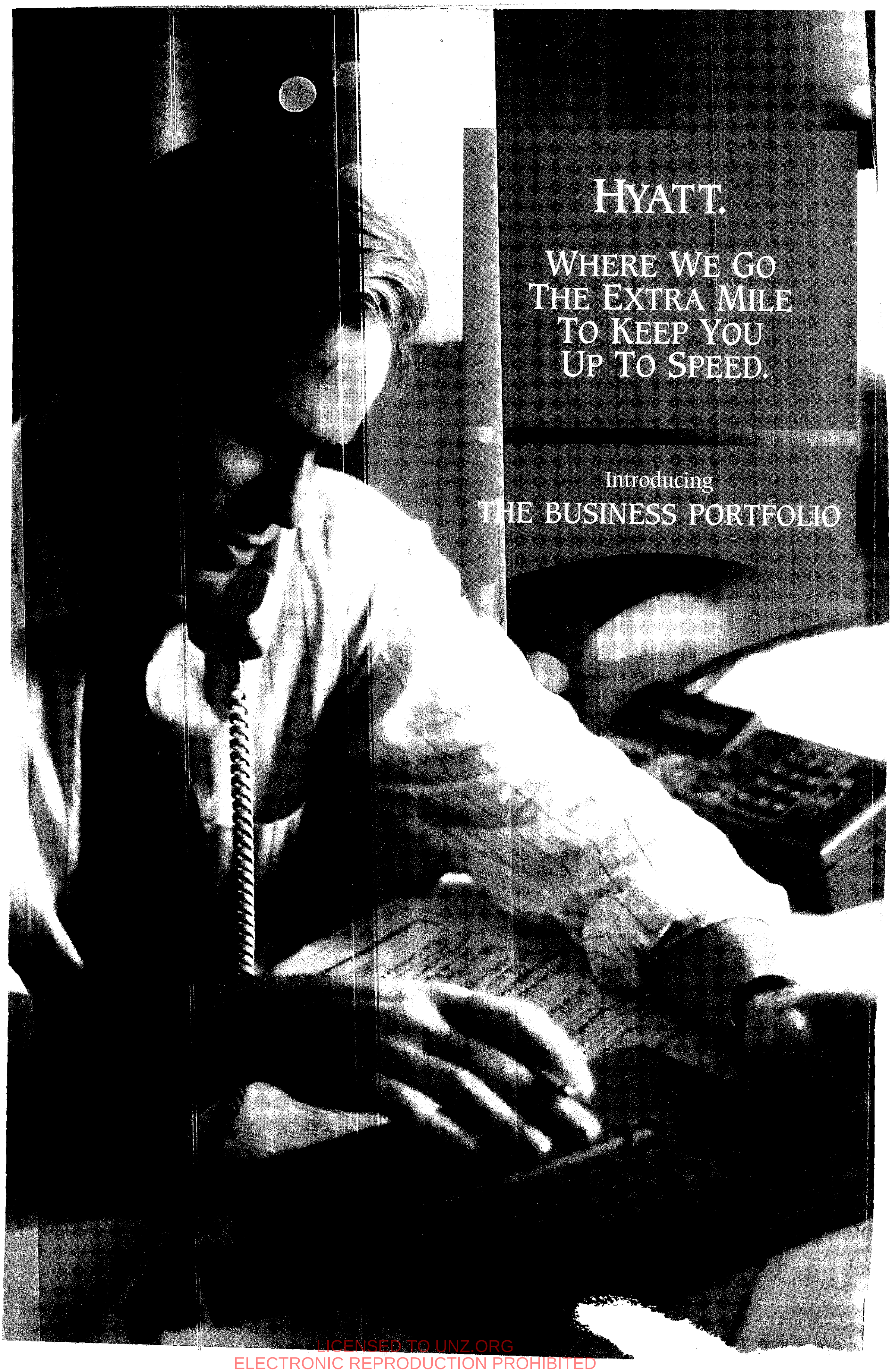
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telling reporters that they hoped to emulate the man who had so famously never quit.

Future ex-Presidents who feel underappreciated will also try to emulate Jimmy Carter's return to public esteem. Had Carter retired to Plains after his drubbing by Reagan put him into what he now calls "almost total limbo," he would no doubt be forgotten today. Instead, his interventions in the world's trouble spots and his efforts against poverty and disease have made him a serious candidate for a Nobel Prize and have given him, according to some polls in the early nineties, higher popularity ratings than Reagan. As has happened with Kennedy's, Carter's popular acclaim is unlikely to move historians to smile more on the Carter Presidency; detractors may echo the acerbic lament that Carter's ex-Presidency has been so wonderful that it is a shame it required a Carter Presidency.

If the Clinton years give way to a Reaganite revival, the Arkansan would for a time probably suffer the same kind of national ignominy that afflicted Carter during the Reagan era: he would be the butt of Republican fund-raising letters and would have a hard time speaking in prime time at the next Democratic Convention. But even then there would be pockets of succor. Just as an Eisenhower Avenue in Teheran commemorated the President whose C.I.A. returned the Shah to power (the Ayatollah later renamed it), there will doubtless be boulevards and piazzas in Port-au-Prince named for Clinton, at least as long as a government of the Aristide stripe remains. George Bush, following his merry excursion to Kuwait City in 1993, can testify to the bracing effect of such honors on the morale of scorned Presidents.

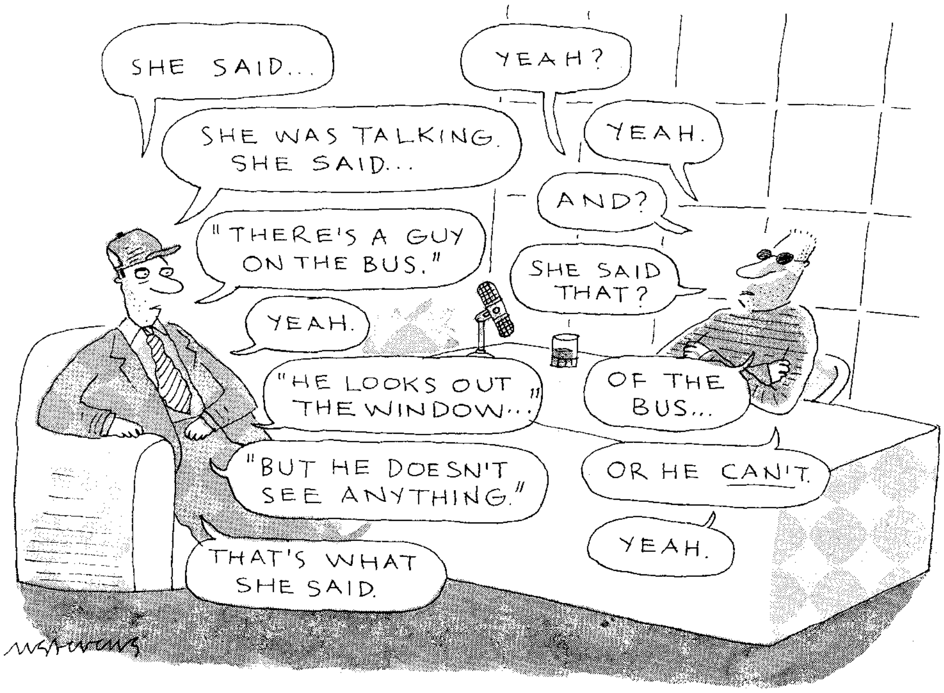
It is difficult to imagine a one-man "Give 'Em Hell, Bill!" that could win for Clinton the folk heroism that Truman now enjoys. The Big Mac jokes would grow thin after the first act, and so might the lead's loquaciousness. And, on the basis of what we have seen so far, the pop culture of the nineties is too gray and indistinct to spawn much future nostalgia for itself or those who are presiding over it.

Most likely, Clinton would fight for restoration to public affection in a hybrid version of what ex-Presidents Nixon and Carter did. Like Carter, whether Clinton serves one or two terms he will almost certainly have decades of active life ahead of him. One can envisage a Clinton Center for Social Change, based in Little Rock, from which he could turn in a glittering performance that could mend a fractured reputation for political effectiveness. Or, as the Washington journalist Sally Quinn has suggested, he might decide to go where the real power is, and become a talk-show host. Like Nixon, Clinton could be expected to use his ferocious powers of one-on-one argument to convince journalists and scholars that he was a better President than they thought at the time. In the manner of Eisenhower, he will probably benefit when the private records of his leadership are opened, reminding future generations of his extraordinary intelligence, energy, and talent with words.

But Clinton's reputation, like that of every President, will rest ultimately on history's judgment of how wise his policies were and how successfully he pursued them. Just as the popularity of Eisenhower and Reagan in their times moved some revisionists to search for feet of clay, Clinton's current unpopularity may move future scholars to probe with special diligence for hidden signs of stature.

It is probably safe to predict that the Clinton limned by historians in thirty or fifty years will bear little resemblance to the man as he is now imagined by American voters. Just as some scholars today view Herbert Hoover's modest innovations as an antecedent to the New Deal, Clinton may be remembered as the author of the "reinventing government" initiative that proved the forerunner of the herculean late-nineties mass movement to prune the federal bureaucracy. Democracy might prevail in Russia and peace in the Middle East, and the intellectual origins of a successful post-Cold War doctrine might be found in the Clinton foreign policy. In that case, this President will be viewed as a more successful diplomatist than many of his peers believed him to be.

If the voters turn Clinton out in 1996, no amount of spin or revisionism may be enough to prevent scholars, though they may applaud some of his deeds, from forcing upon him the minor status accorded most of our Presidents who have failed to keep power. Consider Van Buren, Arthur, Taft, Hoover, Ford, Carter, Bush. American historians like winners more than they should. Thus, for Bill Clinton politics and history now merge. For the moment, he would do well to follow *Rule Seven: One of the best things a sitting President can do to burnish his reputation among future generations is to get reëlected.* ♦


SHE SAID...
YEAH?
SHE WAS TALKING. SHE SAID...
YEAH.
AND?
"THERE'S A GUY ON THE BUS."
SHE SAID THAT?
YEAH.
OF THE BUS...
"HE LOOKS OUT THE WINDOW..."
"BUT HE DOESN'T SEE ANYTHING."
OR HE CAN'T.
YEAH.
THAT'S WHAT SHE SAID.

LATE NIGHT WITH DAVID MAMET

A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE NOVELIST AND THE SHEIKH

The stabbing of Naguib Mahfouz, Egypt's greatest writer, on a Cairo street underscored the struggle between the government and militant Islamists which threatens to tear the country apart. President Hosni Mubarak and Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman explain why.

BY MARY ANNE WEAVER

NAGUIB MAHFOUZ, the Arab world's only Nobel Laureate in Literature, leaves nothing to chance. There is a precision and an economy about him, and he measures his daily life down to the minute. Thus, on the afternoon of October 14, 1994—as he had done every Friday afternoon for seven years—the eighty-two-year-old writer left his apartment building in the Agouza section of Cairo at exactly ten minutes before five, and walked outside. It seemed to him unusually quiet that afternoon as he glanced around the street—a rather ordinary, rather characterless block, where old houses of ochre and beige are interspersed with taller, concrete buildings from the nineteen-fifties, and where there are shops of all kinds, offices and apartment buildings, and, usually, traffic jams and noise.

A small, frail figure, he walked slightly stooped, assisted by a cane; his face was half obscured by heavy dark glasses. (His eyes were failing and sensitive.) He was somewhat irritated, he later recalled, because he did not immediately spot Dr. Fathi Hashem's waiting car. Fathi, a forty-eight-year-old veterinarian, had been picking him up every Friday afternoon for seven years to drive him the ten minutes or so to the Kasr al-Nil, a fashionable café overlooking the Nile, where every Friday evening for thirty years Mahfouz had met with like-minded writers, intellectuals, and disciples. The "Friday sitting" had become a ritual for him.

"The moment I saw him, I jumped out of the car, walked the few feet to where he stood, and gave him my arm," Fathi told me as we sat, with a group of friends, at the Mahfouz table at the Kasr al-Nil café a few weeks afterward. "I opened the right front door of my car for him, he sat down, and I closed the door. Everything seemed normal—except for the lack of people. At least, at first."

Fathi went on, "It was only as I circled the car that I saw the young man approach. He went directly to Mr. Mahfouz's side of the car; I assumed that he wanted to shake his hand, as many people do. The right front window was open, and Mr. Mahfouz extended his hand. It was only when I got into the driver's seat that I noticed that Mr. Mahfouz's body was shaking. I thought the young man was shaking him, and I screamed, 'What are you doing? Are you mad?' It was the only eye contact I had with the man. When I shouted, he hesitated, and for a few seconds his eyes locked with mine. I couldn't see his face, only his forehead and his eyes—they were aggressive and afraid at the same time. He had very dark skin, not like us." Fathi encompassed the table with a sweep of his hand. "Then, in an instant, the young man turned and ran. It was only then that I saw something brown lying on Mr. Mahfouz's shoulder. It was the handle of a knife." He paused for a moment, then added, "The blade was still in his neck, on the right side."

Mahfouz was conscious, but he said nothing as Fathi leaned over and carefully removed the knife. He threw it out of the car, onto the street, and then placed his hand directly over the wound, which was dangerously close to the central carotid artery.

Realizing what had happened, Fathi began shouting for help. People began to appear: *bawabs*, or doormen of sorts, from the apartment buildings, who were dressed mostly in turbans and long, flowing djellabahs; customers from a corner sandwich shop; guards from the Police Hospital, across the street; and a few bearded young men dressed in Western shirts and trousers.

Keeping his right hand on the right side of Naguib Mahfouz's neck, Fathi backed his car out of its parking place, and sped, in reverse, to the main gate of the Police Hospital, some fifty yards away. "It was five minutes total," Fathi told me. "For everything."

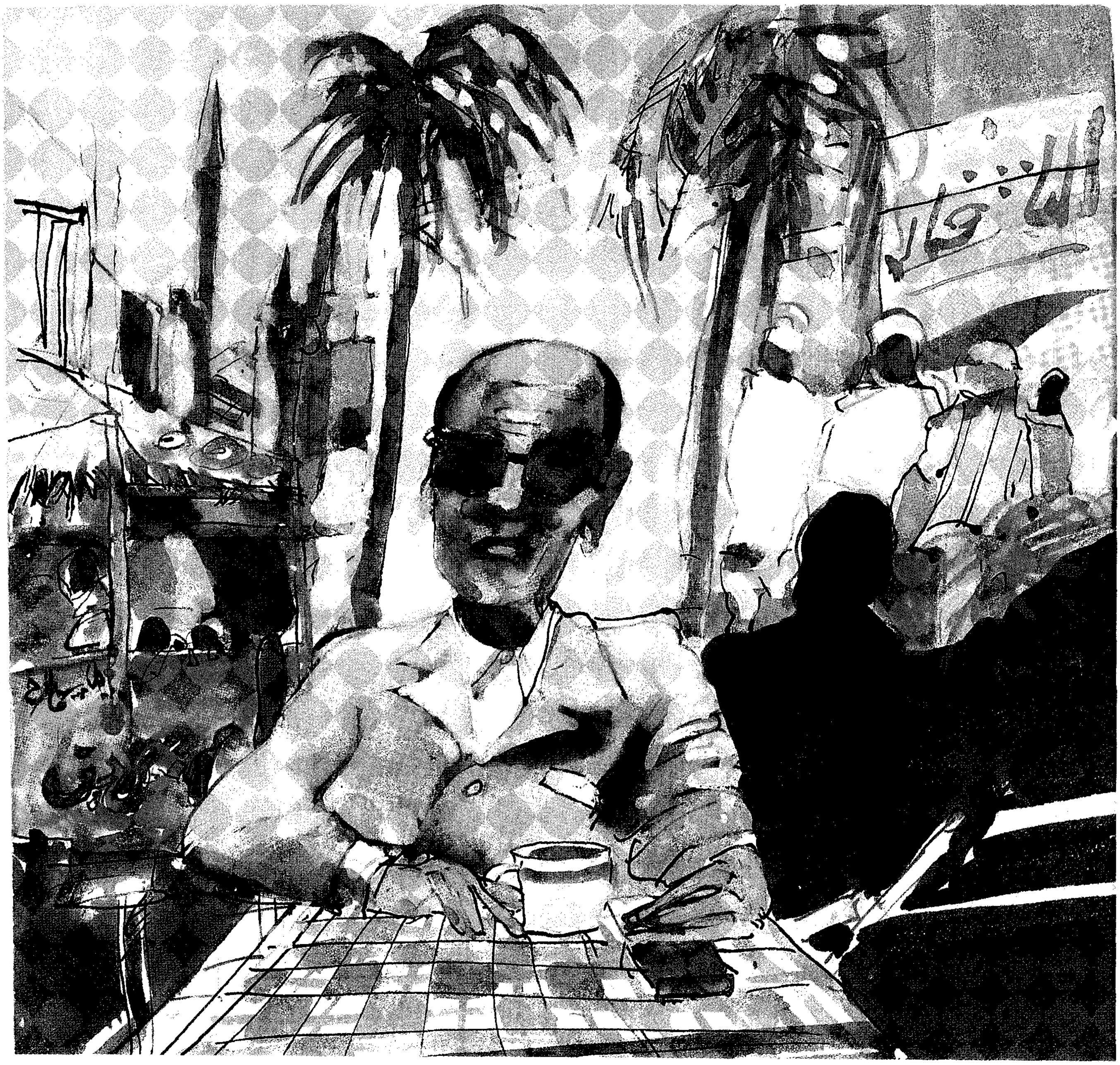
When they reached the hospital, Mahfouz asserted, quite emphatically, that he wanted to leave the car unassisted, and Fathi complied. The moment he removed his hand from the author's neck, however, Mahfouz began bleeding copiously. The doctor who admitted him later recalled a small, frail man, a diabetic with a heart condition, nearly blind and nearly deaf, holding his hand to the right side of his neck. "He said, 'There's a bit of blood here. You might want to look at it. I also have some coldness in my arm.' The moment he removed his hand, blood spurted all over, yet he remained calm. He sat in a chair and waited. In ten minutes, we took him into surgery, for a five-hour operation."

MAHFOUZ had left behind him, outside the hospital's towering concrete walls, in the streets and alleyways, an increasingly cacophonous crowd of *bawabs* and neighbors, street venders and hawkers, café patrons, and merely curious passersby, who now mingled with hundreds of uniformed police. Their voices rose and fell, and they flailed their arms—sometimes so violently that turbans came unwound. Mahfouz had spent an entire lifetime documenting just such scenes—of chaos and confusion, of contradiction spliced with chicanery, of situations in which nothing is what it appears to be—as he perfected the novel form in Arabic literature. He had presented in close, rich detail the intricacies of life in the margins and in the alleyways; his often idiosyncratic characters, from the lower and middle classes, argue over matters of justice and injustice, expectation and disillusionment, and belief in God. His portraits of the city, though they are often compared to Dickens' portraits of London or Zola's of Paris, are preeminently Cairene, as his characters struggle, caught between an uncertain future and the weight of the past.

When Mahfouz's friends heard of the stabbing, they rushed to the Police Hospital, and so did his wife and his two daughters. Like most Cairenes, they were all stunned by the news. It would become the most controversial act of violence in Egypt in years.

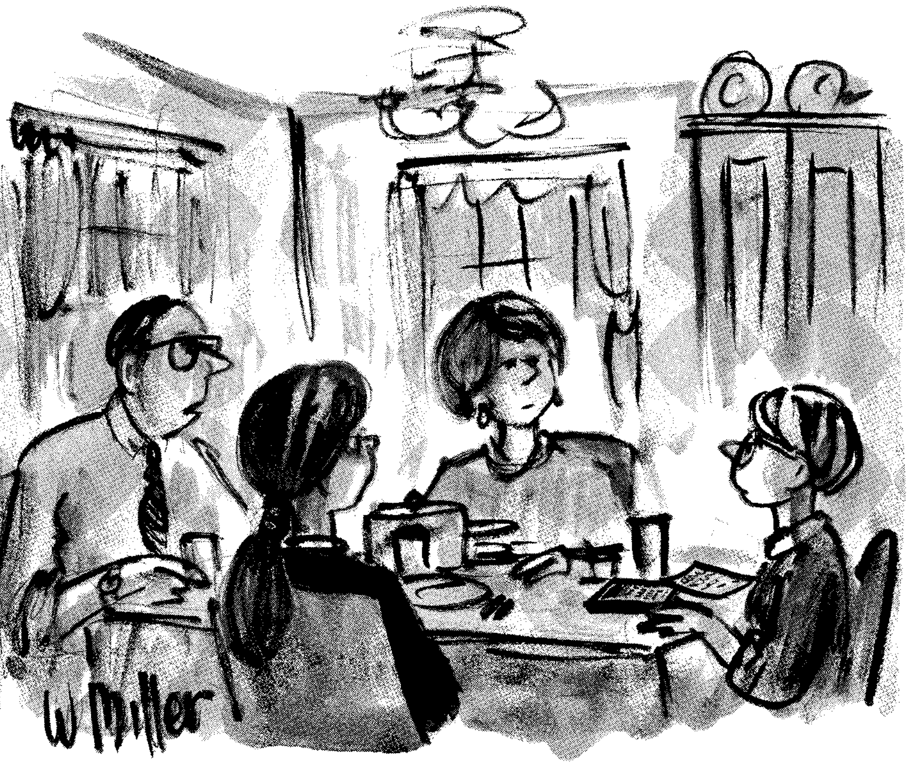
There are many versions of what happened, some of them absurd. But the key questions remain: If it was in fact an assassination attempt, why Naguib Mahfouz? Who was responsible? And, perhaps as important, why did it happen just then? The government was quick to blame the Gama'a al-Islamiya, or the Islamic Group, which is the strongest member of a network of militant underground Islamic groups that have been attempting for the past two years, through violence and stealth, to overthrow President Hosni Mubarak's secular government. (By late last October, when I arrived in Egypt, both the Islamists and the regime had raised the stakes in their increasingly vengeful warfare to a new height. The militants had accelerated attacks on foreign tourists, Coptic Christians, security forces, Cabinet Ministers, and the police. The government had responded brutally.)

Within an hour of the attack on Mahfouz, the government announced—to everyone's sheer astonishment—that an arrest would be made that night; the following morning, seven young men were arrested, and an eighth was killed by police gunfire. One skeptical Cairene told me that the police action reminded him of Claude Rains's saying, "Round up



ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

"Did I somehow prophesy my own attack? Yes, perhaps I did," Naguib Mahfouz says. "But then so much of what is now happening in Egypt is, in a sense, Mahfouzian."



"Must you tell us what our daily share of the national debt is every time we sit down to dinner?"

• •

the usual suspects." Ultimately, sixteen alleged Islamic militants were tried by a special, in-camera military court. (A number of these courts have been set up by Mubarak, and Amnesty International has described them as consistently conducting "grossly unfair trials.") Some of the defendants were charged with attempted murder, others with the illegal possession of explosives and arms—and all of them with membership in Gama'a. Every defendant denied the charges. Earlier this month, the court sentenced two of the defendants to death—against which there is no appeal—and two others to life imprisonment.

Mahfouz had openly criticized the violent tactics of the underground Islamic groups, as he had openly criticized the tactics and, in many cases, the policies of the Mubarak government. He first came to the Islamists' attention more than thirty years ago, when Cairo's powerful religious institution, al-Azhar, which is generally regarded as the Oxford of Islamic learning and thought, had judged one of his books, "Children of Gebelaawi," to be heretical. The novel is filled with allegorical characters who resemble figures from the Koran and the Bible, and describes the complex relationship of a group of Cairo slumdwellers with their various prophets and with God. After being serialized in the prestigious daily newspaper *al-Ahram*, the novel was banned, and no publication of it—indeed, no mention of it—was officially permitted in Egypt for thirty-five years. Then, in 1988, Mahfouz won the Nobel Prize. It was something that completely disordered his exceedingly orderly and exceedingly private life.

The following year, when the furor over Salman Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses" was sweeping the Islamic world, and Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini issued a warrant for Rushdie's death, the blind Egyptian cleric Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman—who is currently standing trial in New York, on charges of, among other things, conspiracy to assassinate President Mubarak and to bomb various New York landmarks—reportedly told a journalist that Rushdie was not unlike Mahfouz: in the Sheikh's opinion, both were heretics. "Islamic law calls on these people to repent, and if they do not, they will be killed," Sheikh Omar was quoted as saying at the time. "If this sentence had been passed on Naguib Mahfouz when he wrote 'Children of Gebelaawi,' Salman Rushdie would have realized that he had to stay within certain bounds."

When I asked a senior Egyptian security official if in his view this amounted to a *fatwa*—or religious opinion—justifying Mahfouz's death, he said that he wasn't sure but that that was the way it had been interpreted, and Egyptian militants had threatened to assassinate the author on the October anniversary of his receiving the Nobel. What was even more important, the official added, was that Sheikh Omar was the spiritual mentor of Gama'a.

"I haven't believed the government's version from the very start; I think they have the wrong man," one of Mahfouz's closest friends told me one afternoon a week or so after a mysterious and dishevelled young man—with fair skin and an Islamic beard—had "confessed" on nationwide television to stabbing Mahfouz in what he claimed was a "kidnapping" attempt gone awry. He later retracted the statement, and most Cairo intellectuals I spoke with found the "confession" more amusing than edifying. Although the young man was sentenced to hang, it is unlikely, given the secrecy of the court proceedings, that the many puzzles surrounding the stabbing will ever be solved.

"It is indeed bizarre," a Western diplomat said to me one afternoon. "It is certainly not the usual modus operandi of the Islamic Group—they have never resorted to the use of primitive weapons in their attacks. Why use a kitchen knife, which requires a great deal of skill, when the chances of success are far greater if you use a gun? This was an extremely amateurish act, and Gama'a is not an unsophisticated group. So does this mean that the movement is splintering even more, and that we're now seeing the emergence of still more fanatic groups? We have got to assume, in the absence of a smoking gun, that the attacker came from the Islamic underground. But a key question is: What does it mean?"

NAGUIB MAHFOUZ was born in a warren of ancient alleys in the heart of Islamic Cairo, behind the al-Hussein Mosque, in the neighborhood of Gamaliya, in December of 1911. His father, a minor civil servant who later became a business manager for a merchant in the bazaar, was highly traditional, and highly distant from his youngest son; his mother was doting and became his closest friend. His childhood was often lonely but otherwise unremarkable. After attending Islamic elementary schools and a secular high school, he entered Cairo (then King Fuad I) University, and in 1934 he graduated with a degree in philosophy. He remembers that period, which coincided with the anticolonial movement against the British, as the happiest of his life—as "the golden age of patriotism . . . when the times themselves were listening to you," he wrote in his 1961 novel "The Thief and the Dogs."

Until 1971, all his works were written late at night, for he spent his days as a government bureaucrat: as an official film censor, an adviser on the arts, and a minor functionary in various ministries, including the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

A private, timid man who married late in life, Mahfouz is a strong believer, a bit of a mystic, and a Fabian socialist of the most passionate sort. By the late nineteen-fifties, social realism had become the defining characteristic of his work. His well-ordered, punctilious daily life was the antithesis of the world he created in his books—some forty books, over forty years. The world of his characters was unsettled and difficult, informed by history, and pervaded by an overwhelming sense of loss. His "Cairo Trilogy," which was largely responsible for his receiving the Nobel, is a family saga tracing three generations and spanning both World Wars. In it he tackled not only religious and political themes, which are his normal forte, but prostitution, drug addiction, and the degradation of the urban poor. In 1979, when he was among the first to support the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, the "Trilogy" and a number of his other works were banned in much of the Arab world.

As the years went by, his novels became increasingly hard-edged and stark, and the failures of contemporary Egypt were his stage. "We live in a repugnant age of slogans," one of the characters in a novella entitled "The Day the President Was Killed" laments. "And between the slogans and the truth is an abyss, into which we have all fallen and lost ourselves." Published more than a decade ago, the novella has all the elements of Mahfouz's prophetic fictional world: the decline of the Egyptian system; the emergence of an authoritarian state; a middle-class urban family torn apart by economic stagnation and uncertainty; the sexual tensions of a young couple in a society in which men and women are kept strictly apart; the rise of corruption, and of Islam, as the almost inevitable result of a system that seems to be spiralling out of control. As he follows one disillusioned young man through his day on October 6, 1981—the day that President Anwar Sadat was assassinated by members of a militant, underground Islamic group—Mahfouz melds illusion and reality through the eyes of his protagonist, Ilwan, and flashes of memory leap about in time. Unable to marry because he cannot find a well-paying job or buy or furnish an apartment, Ilwan, who graduated with honors in philosophy, shares a cramped, dingy room with his grandfather, who lived through the Revolution of 1919, in which Egypt was meant to come of age. Now Ilwan sits in a coffeehouse, and begins a monologue:

> We are a people more acclimatized to defeat than victory. It is just a Mafia which controls us—no more, no less. Where are the good old days? . . . My pride wounded, my heart broken, I have come to this café as a refuge from the pain of loneliness. . . . How many nations live here side by side in this one nation of ours? How many millionaires are there? Relatives and parasites? Smugglers and pimps? Shi'ites and Sunnis?—stories far better than "A Thousand and One Nights."

ONE evening, three and a half weeks after the attack on him, Mahfouz agreed to meet me at the Police Hospital. Security was tight when I arrived at the main gate of the hospital—a large, sprawling complex of glass and chrome—accompanied by one of Mahfouz's friends, a poet named Naim Sabry. Only after passing through a metal detector, presenting identity cards, and having our bags searched twice were we permitted to enter the grounds. We found Mahfouz in his room, on one of the upper floors, with his wife and daughters. A nurse sat at the entrance to the room, and outside the door three security men in plain clothes fidgeted with their Kalashnikovs.

As Mahfouz greeted us, with a weak wave of his hand, I was astonished at how frail he was and how small he seemed—far smaller than his five-foot-three frame. Dressed in a navy-blue robe and pajamas, he sat, slightly stooped, on a wooden chair between two single beds. Speaking in halting English, he asked me to sit on the bed to his left, because he was deaf in his right ear. He had lost a great deal of blood, and had required numerous transfusions. "Concentration tires me," he said, "so don't expect much."

I began by asking Mahfouz the questions that everyone in Cairo was asking: "Why you? Why now?"

His eyes seemed to mist over, and then he said, "I simply got caught in the middle, in the battle between the system and the Islamists. 'Why now?' is not the question—perhaps circumstance or fate—yet it could have happened any time, for I'm convinced that the battle will continue, and that both sides will take it as far as they can. Why me? Why others?" He shrugged, and gave me a sad smile.

"In 'The Day the President Was Killed,' Ilwan searches for order and reason and grapples with God," I said. "Yet nothing in the alleys is as it appears to be."

"Yes," he interrupted, before I could finish my thought. "It's interesting that you chose that book, and obviously what you mean to ask is, Did I somehow prophesy my own attack? Yes, perhaps I did. But then so much of what is now happening in Egypt is, in a sense, Mahfouzian."

THE streets of Cairo are like no other streets in the world. Every corner, every crevice, every alleyway seems to be inhabited. Crowds of pedestrians and traffic jostle for space, and noise is everywhere—a pervasive din of car horns tooting, street venders hawking their wares, and muezzins, their voices shrilly amplified, calling the faithful to prayers. Yet as I wandered around one late-October afternoon I was struck, more than ever before in the twenty years that I have known Cairo, by the impression of a city that was angry and out of control. People seemed to be living on the edge, as much of the city's infrastructure, like its ancient monuments, was being reduced to dust. Corruption flourished, and political stagnation ossified. The number of Cairenes increased by nearly a thousand every day, in a country whose population, of nearly sixty million—a third of the Arab world—grew by more than a million every year. Yet ninety-five per cent of that population lived on less than five per cent of the land. Every year, Egypt produces more than a hundred thousand university graduates, many of whom cannot find jobs—

in a country whose literacy rate has remained frozen at about fifty per cent. The city's once astonishing diversity of cultures and social strata had seemingly been reduced to two starkly contrasting poles: poverty, which appeared to be everywhere, and extraordinary wealth. All across Cairo, as I drove back to my hotel, it was easy to spot soaring new apartment buildings of glass and polished chrome and, immediately behind them, narrow, labyrinthine lanes where half-naked children played—as they had done in "Midaq Alley," one of Mahfouz's most popular books—with cockroaches, in mud and dust.

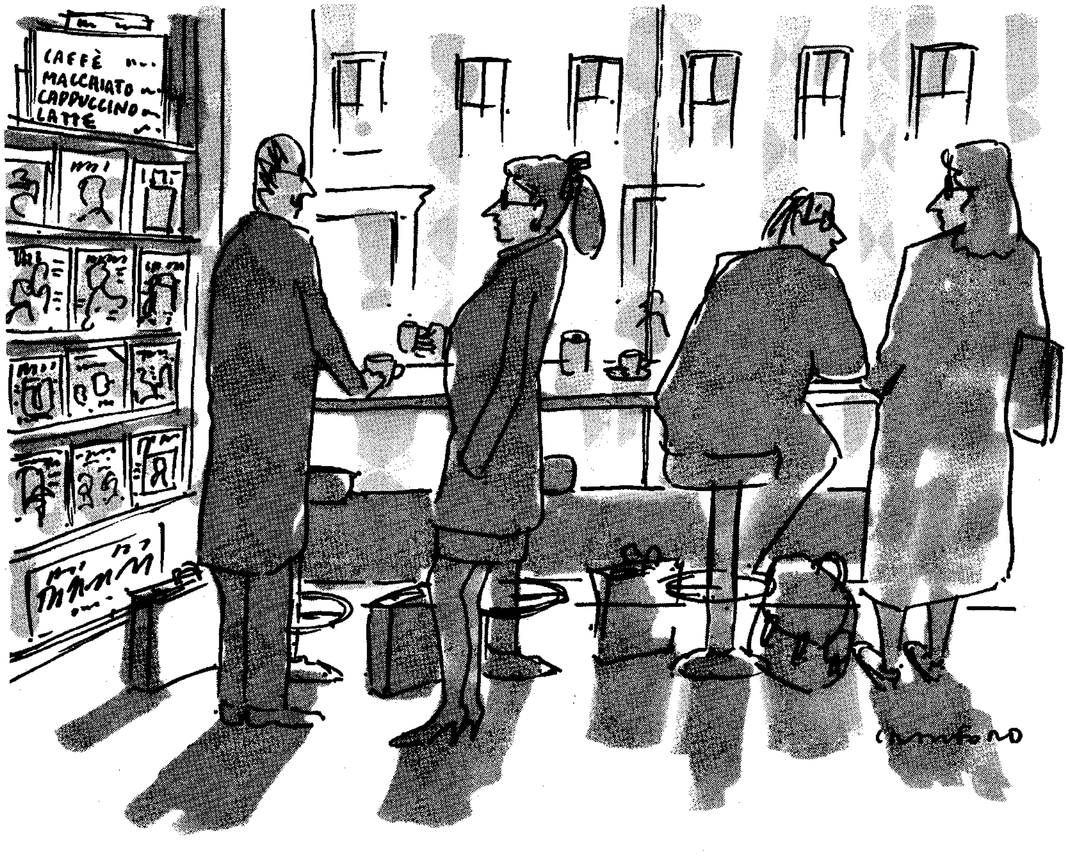
As I continued through Tahrir Square, everything there seemed dwarfed by a bulbous gray twelve-story structure, Stalinesque in design, called the Mugamma. It is the headquarters of Egypt's equally bulbous state bureaucracy, three million strong. Many Cairenes say that more souls are at rest in the Mugamma than in the City of the Dead. (According to a recent study, the average Egyptian bureaucrat works twenty-seven minutes a day.) The Mugamma, perhaps more than anything else, has come to symbolize a system that had been created by Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, in 1952, but was now exhausted, and in steady decline.

Mubarak had become the coincidental inheritor of that system in 1981, when his predecessor, Anwar Sadat, was gunned down by members of a military cell of al-Jihad—a group that, like Gama'a and others in today's militant Islamic underground, had been encouraged, trained, and armed to challenge the left by Sadat himself. As the third generation of the revolution, Mubarak lacked the charisma of Nasser and the vision of Sadat, and many Cairenes say that he is a bit like a Mahfouz bureaucrat: gray, one-dimensional, almost smaller than life.

Since the late nineteen-seventies, when I lived in Cairo, Egypt has been receiving lavish amounts of Western aid, including some two billion dollars a year from the United States. It is, after Israel, Washington's second-largest recipient of funds, and the largest United States overseas aid operation since Vietnam. The money began arriving after the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1979, when President Sadat embarked on policies that transformed Cairo—the Islamic world's largest city—into the hub of American policy in the Middle East. But the distribution of the aid was uneven at best, and little of it filtered down. The new wealth also bred a new, and ostentatious, class, which surrounded Sadat and now surrounds Mubarak. Its members think little of spending four hundred thousand dollars on a new Mercedes—or a hundred and fifty thousand dollars on a daughter's wedding at a five-star Cairo hotel—while the nation's per-capita G.N.P. remains frozen at around six hundred dollars a year.

The government's reputation for rampant corruption is fuelling popular discontent and is being exploited by the Islamists; it is also leading to growing consternation among Western donors and diplomats. Particularly nettlesome are the mounting accusations against the Gang of Sons, as the wheeling-and-dealing offspring of a number of key Mubarak officials are called; two of the most frequently mentioned are the sons of the President. Accusations that the Gang of Sons—and, by extension, the Mubarak government—is actively assisting neighboring Libya in circumventing United Nations sanctions have led to a number of recent rebukes from the United States. Nevertheless, Washington continues to have an enormous stake in the Mubarak regime, for on assuming office Mubarak immediately reaffirmed Egypt's commitment to the peace treaty with Israel, began reëstablishing the nation's place as a leader in the Arab world, and set to work behind the scenes as a mediator in the ongoing quest for Middle Eastern peace. Later, he, more than anyone else, gave legitimacy to the United States-led coalition in the Gulf War.

As I headed back to my hotel, I passed clusters of riot policemen, their faces partly hidden by visored helmets, who were standing guard outside tourist centers and half-empty hotels. The campaign by Islamic militants to cripple Egypt's economy through attacks on tourism—the country's No. 1 source of foreign exchange—had cost the Mubarak government one and a half billion dollars last year, and had decimated the tourist industry. Combined with an admittedly timid government attempt at



"Well, enough of the coy sexual byplay, Bobby. I've got to dive back into the data stream."

structural economic reform, the growing reluctance of foreign investors to consider Egypt potentially promising had only served to widen the gap between the rulers and the ruled. And the social and economic alienation that was largely fuelling the Islamic flame was almost certainly going to get worse. Waging war on the Islamists will not change that.

When I asked a Western ambassador how serious a threat the Islamic groups posed, he replied, "Unlike Algeria, they're not regime-threatening—at least, not yet—but if the government continues to refuse to address the root causes of this revolt, and persists in treating it as merely a law-and-order problem, I'll be a little less certain about that. Mubarak has a mindset about the Islamists, and he keeps insisting to us that they're a creation of Iran and Sudan, but doesn't produce a shred of evidence. Some Iranian money probably is coming in, and some Egyptians are undoubtedly training in Sudanese camps, but it is very wrong—indeed, potentially self-defeating—to put all the weight on external help, because the great majority of weapons, money, and recruits and the anger that fuels them are coming from here. Despite Mubarak's pronouncements, the problem is not Iran or Sudan. It's him."

The anger of which the ambassador spoke had increased almost palpably in the eighteen months since I'd last been in Egypt. So had the level of violence, and the intransigence on both sides. Egypt seemed to be sliding into an incipient guerrilla war, in which neither the Islamists nor the security forces had defined any front lines. At the street level, the country had been transformed into a police state that is never quite in control. Thousands of political prisoners are being systematically tortured, as part of official policy; hundreds have "disappeared"; hostage-taking and collective punishment are common practices; and entire neighborhoods have been cordoned off, and mosques and houses razed.

One morning, I called on two writers who had received death threats from the Islamists, and found both of them hidden away—one inside his shuttered apartment, the other in his office, with thick curtains drawn. In both cases, heavily armed guards were standing at attention outside their doors. I then visited a group of young men, mostly students, who were also hidden away, in a slum neighborhood in one of Mahfouz's labyrinths. They hadn't attended classes in more than a month, they said. When I asked why, one replied, "Because we're bearded, and we're young. To be young and bearded in Egypt is a crime."

What Mahfouz has termed "the concealed side"—the reality that hides behind convention and form in societies where repression has become an inescapable part of everyday life—did not express itself in a highly visible presence of crack troops or of uniformed policemen on the streets, though I did notice them from time to time. It expressed itself mostly in fear in the alleyways and in outrage in sophisticated Cairo salons. It also expressed itself in a growing anti-Americanism, which I had not known in Egypt before, and in an intellectual siege, in which the country's writers, directors, playwrights, and poets found themselves increasingly caught between the Islamists, on the one hand, and the government, on the other—especially the official sheikhs of al-Azhar, whose increasingly strident pronouncements, as they attempted to guide artistic thought, were proving as outrageous as the demands of many militants.

"What is happening to our civility?" Egypt's best filmmaker, an eccentric genius named Youssef Chahine, asked. His most recent film, "The Emigrant," which was hugely successful and broke all Egyptian attendance records, had come under attack by the militants, who alleged that it was based on the Biblical travels of Joseph, and thus personalized a prophet in a human way. There were bomb threats against one of the theatres where it was being shown, and an obscure Islamist lawyer, backed by al-Azhar, had demanded that the film be banned. The case is now in the courts. "You know," Chahine told me, "last year I had a film"—a docudrama depicting the alienation of Cairo's slumdwellers—"banned by the *government*." Unlike many writers and artists, Chahine hadn't been *fatwa*-ed, but he felt threatened nevertheless.

"Harriet, do we have any nuts?"

• •

"All of us do," he said. "Both physically and artistically. Strangling someone's work is like hitting Naguib Mahfouz in the neck."

Mahfouz had begun receiving death threats in 1988, only days after being awarded the Nobel Prize—when the controversy over the banned "Children of Gebelaawi" was revived—but he had doggedly refused to accept armed government guards. "I walk to the coffee shop, and I don't look to the left or the right," Mahfouz said in an interview at the time. "And so what if they get me? I have lived my life and done what I wanted to do."

Like most Egyptian secularists, Mahfouz, who had frequently called on the government to enter into a dialogue with its Islamic foes, had grown concerned over the steady, consistent rise in the influence of the Islamists in the schools and universities, in the news media, in the courts, and in the arts, and over what he considered an acquiescent government response. (Clearly baffled by the movement, the government has veered between suppression and a highly orchestrated campaign to make itself appear more Islamic than the Islamic activists.) Last year, Mahfouz's concern gave way to alarm when the Minister of Culture agreed to demands by an Islamist parliamentarian that any books scheduled for publication by his Ministry be sent to al-Azhar for review. Never before in the history of modern Egypt had any government agreed to such a demand. Mahfouz issued a furious statement, signed by scores of artists and writers, in which he described the assault on the arts as "intellectual terrorism," and he later told friends, "The censor in Egypt is no longer just the state. It's the gun of the fundamentalists."

Al-Azhar University, the oldest university in the world, attracts thousands of students each year from every part of the Muslim world. It has long been a prime recruiting ground for the Muslim Brotherhood—the oldest and most moderate of Egypt's Islamic groups—and its graduates have, in turn, reëxported the Brotherhood's brand of militant Islam throughout the Muslim world. What is far more worrying to the Egyptian government, however, is the Brotherhood's recent success, thanks largely to funding from Saudi Arabia, in recruiting prominent sheikhs from within al-Azhar itself.

Western diplomats were thus not surprised when the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar, aged seventy-seven, who had been appointed by Mubarak, issued a scathing *fatwa* against holding a United Nations conference on population in Cairo last fall, or when he granted the title of *shahid*, or martyr—the highest accolade that an Islamist can receive—to a young member of Gama'a who had joined forces with the Palestinian militant group Hamas in a shooting spree in Jerusalem which left sixteen wounded or dead.

The diplomats and Egypt's increasingly beleaguered secularists were nevertheless stunned when one of the world's leading moderate Islamic scholars, Sheikh Muhammad al-Ghazali, of al-Azhar, testifying for the defense at the trial of those accused of assassinating the writer Farag Foda, in 1992, effectively endorsed the extrajudicial killing of anyone who opposed the implementation of Islamic Sharia law. For the secularists, Sheikh al-Ghazali had come to represent a dangerous convergence between Egypt's radical and moderate Islamic political trends. In their view, as the government has accommodated al-Azhar, and thus emboldened it, al-Azhar has begun adopting political ideas from the militants.

"Suddenly, we realized that within al-Azhar there are many sheikhs who aid and abet the violence, who give it credence," Tehseen Bashir, a retired Egyptian Ambassador, told me over tea. "Al-Azhar has always been a center. Sheikh Yassin [the leader of Hamas] studied there; so did Hasan al-Turabi [the leader of the Islamic movement in the Sudan] and Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman. And today we see the sheikhs of al-Azhar issuing *fatwas* as extreme as those of Gama'a, and they are doing it with the active encouragement of the Muslim Brotherhood."

The key question about the banned Brotherhood—one that has proved vexing to Egypt's nervous bourgeoisie and to many of its Western friends—is whether it has really renounced violence, as it claims to have done. It maintains that it has no direct control over groups like Gama'a, but many Egyptians and Westerners aren't convinced.

"How overt the coördination is between the groups is secondary," one Western diplomat told me when I called on him. "What matters is that all these groups have a relationship that works;

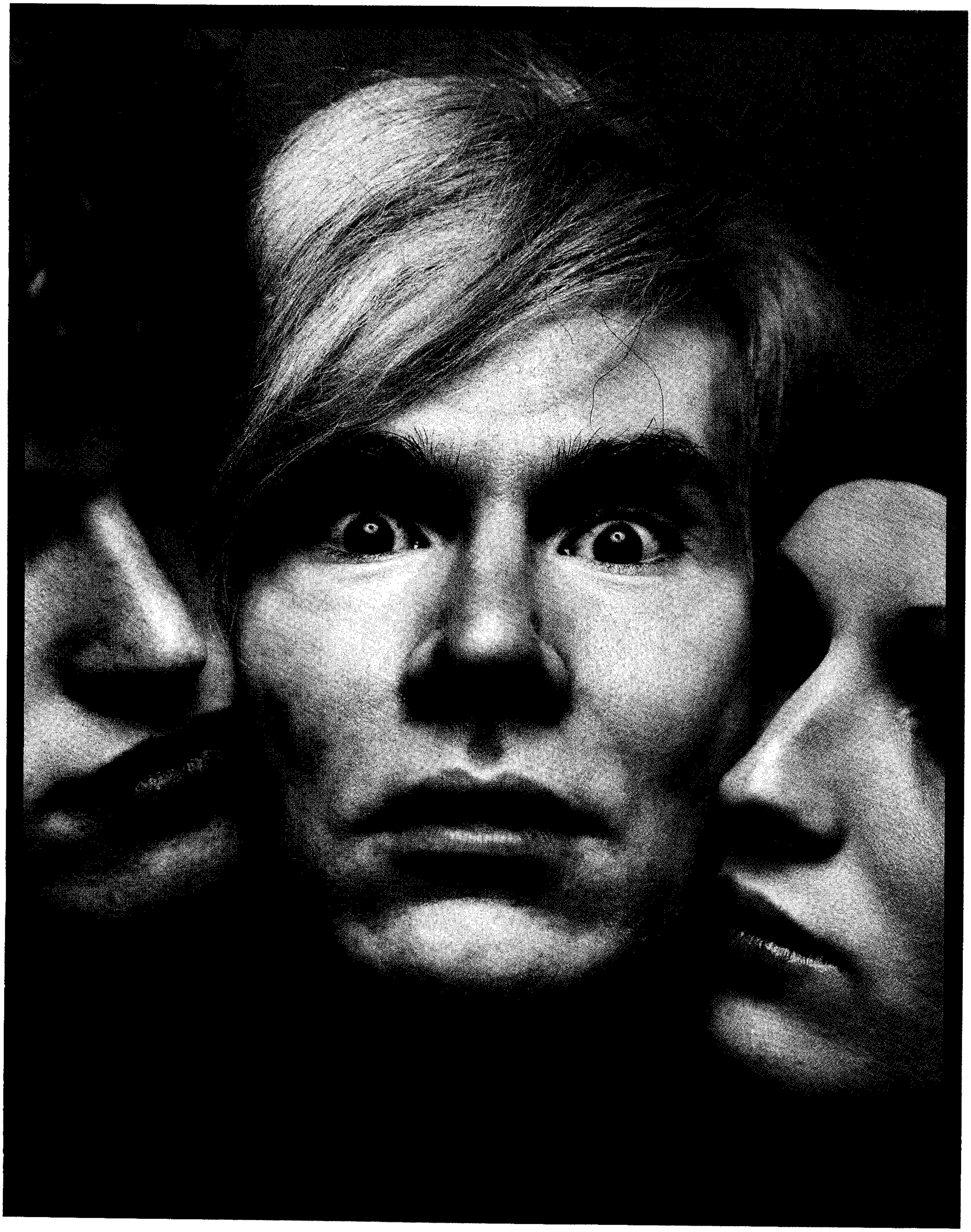
SHOWCASE

CINEMA FACTORY

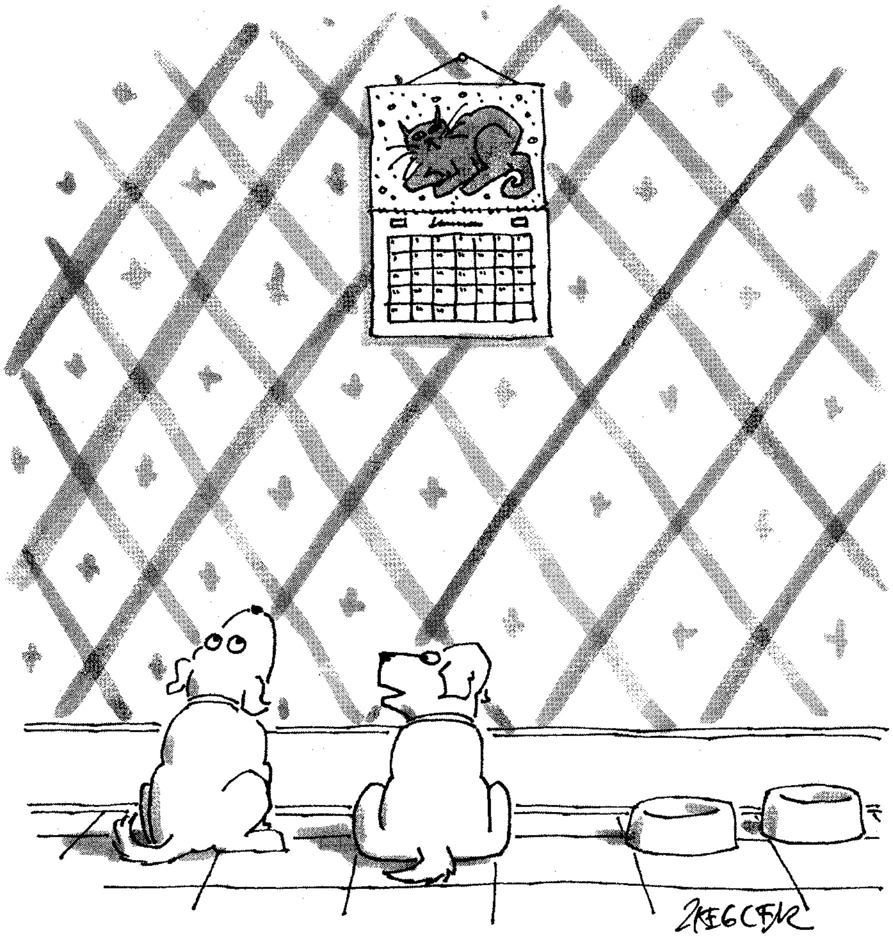
It has always struck me as odd that within the Factory, the studio playground where Andy Warhol made movies until a 1968 assassination attempt by Valerie Solanas ended his directing career and nearly ended his life, the drug of choice was speed. For what is celebrated in the sixty or so films that Warhol personally supervised—from the 1963 serial "Kiss" to the 1968 Western "Lonesome Cowboys"—is lassitude. In "The Chelsea Girls" (1966), for example, various demimondaines do little more than hang out at the Factory, at the Chelsea Hotel, and in assorted apartments around town. In the silent "Henry Geldzahler" (1964), the Metropolitan Museum's emissary to the avant-garde fidgets interminably within the prison of Warhol's voyeuristic gaze. And, of course, "Empire" (1964) contains the most famous static shot in the history of cinema: an eight-hour stare at the city's most phallic monument. The nose-picking numbness of the pictures may have been what Warhol had in mind when, in his last interview, he said the movies were "better talked about than seen." But in our talk-barraged world their meditative pace and deadpan taciturnity have become almost virtues.

Other virtues are clearly visible in the twenty-three movies making up the retrospective "The Warhol Factory: 1963-68," at Film Forum from January 27th to February 9th. Humor, for one thing; the silly sins of the 1967 "Bike Boy" can be forgiven for the scene where the ethereal Ingrid Superstar tells a studly Joe Spencer, "That's what I hate about you men. You all *know* that you're good-looking." Another is the way Warhol collapses the sixties debate over high and low art: in "My Hustler" (1965), a Fire Island artiste (Ed Hood) ogles a Tadzio on the beach while reciting, in the original, the opening lines of Dante's "Inferno." Perhaps the chief recommendation of the festival, however, is aesthetic. The Warhol Foundation may eventually make the movies available for home consumption, but the big screen is still the optimal place to pay proper homage to these sixties superstars.

—Brendan Lemon



Andy Warhol with Jay Johnson and Candy Darling, photographed by Richard Avedon in New York City, October 30, 1969.



"It's a cat calendar, so it may not be all that accurate."

• •

their goals are the same. They could be rivals, they could be in competition, or somewhere in between. That doesn't matter. What does is that they have an effective distribution of labor, and that the glue that holds it all together is the money from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, whether it comes from individuals or from their governments."

IMBABA, only a bridge away from the affluent island of Zamalek, is one of Cairo's most dismal and sprawling slums, holding some eight hundred thousand people. In it stark, sometimes tottering houses, built of stucco or brick or of corrugated iron and mud, line a labyrinth of open sewers and unpaved alleyways. The alleys are so narrow that they are little more than dark, hidden passageways. Some of them are less than six feet wide, and an attempt to navigate them by car meant lurching, no faster than a person could walk, through gullies and ravines, then negotiating one's way around chicken coops, uncollected garbage, and open cesspools. Laundry hung from rooftops and from window frames on both sides of the car, and when there was a wind the laundry met in the middle of the alley, creating billowing barricades. I had come here with a graduate student—whom I will call Ahmad, since at the moment he is living underground—and we decided that it was far more practical to walk.

From the moment you arrive in Imbaba, the problems facing Egypt overwhelm you. There is almost no government presence here: few services; no sanitation; only sputtering electricity; few hospitals or schools. We had left the government behind us at the last paved road.

We finally reached our destination, the al-Iman Billah Mosque. One of some seventy thousand unofficial, or what are called "popular," mosques in Egypt, it was little more than a room on the ground floor of a dun-colored apartment building in Imbaba's Munira Gharbiya neighborhood. Militant Islamic slogans were defiantly scrawled across its walls, above latticed windows and brown-painted doors, which were sealed with immense padlocks. The government, in its move to crush the Islamic groups, had closed all of Munira's popular mosques—there were ten—and imprisoned their sheikhs. The sheikh of al-Iman Billah was a medical doctor who, without charges or trial, had been in the "punishment ward" of various Cairo prisons for more than four years. Sheikhs from the neighborhood's other popular mosques—including professors, lawyers, and a former Marxist economist—had been in prison just as long. (A fairly significant number of former Marxist and socialist professionals are part of the militant Islamic movement now.) But the popular mosques—nearly a thousand of which had been shut down nationwide—were, in a sense, like the Islamic militants themselves: quiescent in one province or in one neighborhood after a government crackdown, they would spring up in another.

Leaving the al-Īman Billah, we moved next door, to a coffeehouse, and sat at one of a number of small wicker tables spilling out into the alleyway, while four disagreeable-looking plainclothes security men at the table next to us were fingering worry beads. As we sipped tiny cups of thick coffee, we watched the life of the alleys pass by: a young girl on a donkey, who was dressed in a black djellabah and wearing the traditional head scarf, or *hijab;* birds in wicker cages, in a cart pulled by a mule; a herd of goats waiting to be slaughtered outside a butcher shop, where carcasses of meat hung from spikes and blew in the breeze. A group of dark-eyed, dark-skinned men in djellabahs, with prayer caps or floppy turbans on their heads, walked by silently in single file, as if performing a secret military drill. The security men stared at them, and they stared back. The dark-skinned men were mostly from the countryside of Upper Egypt, Ahmad said, where the battle between the Islamists and the regime was most intense. Many Cairenes worried that the chaos it had spawned was driving Upper Egypt dangerously close to civil war.

A buxom woman who had tattoos on her fingers and her nose, and whose head was covered by a scarf, joined us; Ahmad introduced her to me as Gamila, the neighborhood prostitute. She told me that she gave twenty per cent of her earnings to a popular mosque. An alley-dweller is not just a person but part of a social network, a professor of sociology had told me earlier. And now, as I watched the life on the street, it seemed to me that, as in so many of Mahfouz's works, two seemingly contradictory worlds coexisted in the alleys—a world of extreme Islamic activism and a world of extreme vice.

And those who lived here, tucked away from public view, were—like the alleys—Mahfouzian. They included civil servants and bureaucrats, the educated unemployed, laborers and shopkeepers, pensioners and petty thieves, drummers and belly dancers, drug dealers and prostitutes. As they measured their lives against their hopes, they came up short, so it is hardly surprising that the alleys of Imbaba had become a stronghold of the militant Islamic groups.

The two strongest of these groups are Gama'a al-Islamiya and al-Jihad. For religious counsel and guidance, both of them follow the teachings of Gama'a's spiritual mentor, Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman—the sheikh now on trial in Manhattan on charges of conspiring to bomb New York City landmarks. It is easy to find cassettes of his sermons in the Imbaba alleyways, and his name is familiar there. After Ahmad and I left the coffeehouse, we watched men transform a small, empty square by spreading out straw mats for midday prayers. The few women in evidence were shrouded in black *abayas;* they were anonymous forms, gliding in and out of storefront shops. The sounds, from amplified systems, or from radios, were those of the Koran. I saw on nearly every crumbling wall we passed, and flying from balconies above, the green-and-white flags and signs of the Muslim Brotherhood. "Islam Is the Solution," they announced.

The Islamists, led by the Brotherhood, had built their own social and welfare system here. Gama'a-controlled popular mosques had set up discount health clinics and schools, day-care centers, and furniture factories to employ the unemployed, and they provided meat, at wholesale prices, to the poor. Despite an aggressive, ten-million-dollar social program launched by the government last fall, the Islamists' institutions remained generally far more efficient and far superior to run-down government facilities. Along with the collapse of every secular ideology embraced by Egyptian politicians and intellectuals during this century, it was government repression and ineptitude, far more than militants' guns and bombs, that were fuelling the Islamic flame.

Dissent was rarely tolerated in the alleys under Gama'a's control. Girls and women were harassed if they ventured outside without covering their heads, and I noticed that even girls as young as six—as opposed to the usual age of twelve or thirteen—had "taken the veil," and were wearing *hijabs.* Christian shopkeepers were made to pay "taxes"—forcibly, I was told—for their protection, and many had removed icons of the Virgin Mary from their walls. Groups of militants, armed with knives and guns, went around burning video shops, and there were many neighborhoods that policemen feared to enter after dark. Local emirs, or princes, were appointed—most often bearded young men wearing long white robes and crocheted prayer caps. Throughout their areas of control, they imposed Islamic law by fiat. In Imbaba, the Islamists had, for all intents and purposes, created a state within a state. Then, in December of 1992, the government moved in, in an abortive attempt to crush the Islamic groups. It was a virtual invasion, of some fifteen thousand troops. Raids have occurred intermittently ever since.

I found evidence of the violence everywhere I went: metal sheeting pockmarked with bullet holes; popular mosques whose doors had been cemented closed; the faces of mothers whose sons had disappeared; and a young boy, barely a teen-ager, who had been arrested and buried up to his neck for days at a time, in highly saline soil in a state security camp. His skin, discolored and disfigured, resembled that of a leper, and it was impossible to guess his age.

I MET Ali Ismail, a lawyer who defended members of the Islamic groups, in his office, in a flooded, unlighted Imbaba alleyway. A stocky man in his mid-thirties, whose most distinguishing characteristics are deep, dark eyes and a neatly trimmed black beard, he greeted me and my interpreter warmly and offered us Pepsi. Then he guided us from an outer office into his own—a small, bare whitewashed room lit by a single electric bulb that dangled from the ceiling. The shutters on the only window were closed.

During the security operation in December of 1992, Imbaba had been effectively sealed off from the world. "They cordoned off the entire area at four or five strategic points," Ismail said. "People woke up in the morning to find themselves under siege. There had been so many police operations here before that people got used to it. But there had never been anything like this. It was unprec-

FAT

The doctor says it's better for my spine
this way—more fat, more estrogen.
Well, then! There was a time when a wife's
plump shoulders signified prosperity.

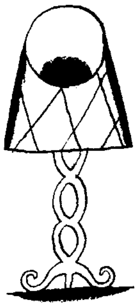
These days my fashionable friends
get by on seaweed milkshakes,
Pall Malls, and vitamin pills. Their clothes
hang elegantly from their clavicles.

As the evening news makes clear
the starving and the besieged maintain
the current standard of beauty without effort.

Whenever two or three gather together
the talk turns dreamily to sausages,
purple cabbages, black beans and rice,
noodles gleaming with cream, yams, and plums,
and chapati fried in ghee.

—Jane Kenyon

edented in its intensity, in its viciousness, in its length of time, and in the number of arrests. It went on night and day, for five weeks. By the first evening, the idea of collective punishment was the defining line: they would arrest all those who were bearded and young, their mothers and fathers, their children and wives. *Babies* were even taken in. And children less than ten years old were herded into police stations and tortured, to pressure their fathers to turn themselves in.



"Women were tortured with electroshocks and beaten in the streets—dragged by their hair, after their *hijabs* were savagely torn off their heads. Altogether, there were no fewer than five thousand long-term arrests. Over the next year, some forty-five hundred people were released; they were never charged or tried. Many of them have no idea why they were arrested—except that they lived in Imbaba's alleyways."

"What about the five hundred others?" I asked.

"They're all still in prison," he said. "Some of them were charged and tried, and most were acquitted and ordered released by the courts. Others—the great majority, four hundred or so—were never brought to trial, because the courts ordered their release for lack of evidence." He paused for a moment, and then he continued, "But under our emergency law"—which has been in effect ever since the assassination of Sadat—"when you go to prison in Egypt there's no hope of getting out."

According to Human Rights Watch, the number of Islamists in Egyptian jails in 1994 was over twenty thousand—as opposed to some six thousand the previous year. When I called on General Hassan al-Alfi, the hard-line Minister of the Interior, he became increasingly agitated, and said that these figures were totally wrong. He refused to provide an alternative number, however, and would say only that some four thousand Islamists had been arrested in 1994. Ismail told me that a total of nearly thirty-eight thousand were being held. It was the largest number of political prisoners in Egypt's modern history, and the vast majority of those prisoners had been ordered released by civilian courts.

Ismail explained the way the Orwellian system worked. When Islamists are acquitted by the courts, most of them are transferred almost immediately to the headquarters of the dreaded State Security Investigation, or S.S.I., an arm of the Interior Ministry, and they are kept there for anything from a week to a month. Then a new order is issued for their arrest, signed by the Minister of the Interior himself. During the period between a person's acquittal and his re-arrest, an S.S.I. official draws up documents claiming that he has been released. "And who would know?" Ismail said. "They've been in S.S.I. headquarters all along. This has happened in Egypt before. But what is noteworthy, and alarming, is that it's the usual procedure now."

I asked him to give me an example, and he spoke of Hassan al-Garabawi, a lawyer from a slum area called Ayn Shams. He had been arrested in January of 1989 and acquitted in May of the following year. Since that time, thirty court orders had been issued for his release and thirty new detention orders filed. This month, Hassan al-Garabawi will have been in prison for six years. He has never left jail, even though he has been ordered released by five different judges, five times a year.

"I have fifty cases of such severity," Ismail said. "They are doctors, lawyers, architects who are being held incommunicado in what is called 'the highly guarded prison'—the Scorpion." (The Scorpion, a new prison within the high-security section of Cairo's Tora Prison complex, is one of Egypt's most dreaded detention sites. A number of lawyers and judges told me that it had been built at least partly with aid from the United States.) "And this is *illegal*," Ismail went on. "Here are the court rulings." He waved a sheaf of papers in the air. "Abdel Harith Madani was one of the attorneys who challenged this. He was not the most prominent or the most forceful, but he could have paid the price with his life."

I HAD met Abdel Harith Madani—a handsome young man of thirty, with intense dark eyes, a square black beard, and short black hair—in the office of another Islamist lawyer when I visited Cairo in 1993. Soft-spoken, almost shy, Abdel Harith had defended many Islamic militants, including some (there have been fifty-six in all) who have been sentenced to death. In April of 1994, he was arrested by the S.S.I. "I know the case dot for dot," Ismail said. "He was my friend." The account he gave me was later confirmed by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

April 26th was a beautiful early-summer day, and Abdel Harith, after spending the day in court, returned home for an early dinner with his twenty-one-year-old wife and their two infant daughters. Then, as was his custom, he jogged along the Nile; jogging and soccer were passions of his. He was particularly pleased with himself that evening, for only a few days earlier he had won an important case: a court had ruled that the incommunicado detention of prisoners in the Scorpion was contrary to the Egyptian Constitution and the penal code. Just the previous morning, he had had the documents hand-carried to the director of the Scorpion.

Abdel Harith had often told friends that the spiralling violence in his country appalled him, and now he was attempting to broker a ceasefire between the two sides, through a respected opposition member of Parliament, Kamal Khalid. He hoped to have word from Khalid later that evening on the government's response.

He arrived at his law office, in the fashionable area of Giza, at around eight o'clock that evening, and he apparently didn't notice that unmarked S.S.I. cars were parked just down the block. Three lawyers with whom he shared the office were already there. Like Abdel Harith, they were members of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, and, like him, they headed a legal-aid fund—reliably said to be underwritten by Saudi Arabia—for Islamist detainees. Khalid had called him, one of the other lawyers said, but Abdel Harith was never able to return the call. Nine S.S.I. officers stormed the office, breaking down the door. Several others cordoned off the building. The four young lawyers were told to stand up and face the wall, with their arms raised above their heads. They remained there for three hours, as the S.S.I. officers tore the office apart.

Abdel Harith was then driven blindfolded to his home by the S.S.I. (The three other lawyers were released.) The officers ransacked his apartment, terrifying his wife and his daughters. Then they drove him to the S.S.I. headquarters in Giza. It was just past midnight.

Across Giza, at the Kasr al-Ayni Hospital, where a small rooftop extension on the eighth floor had been transformed into a secret prison ward, doctors remember that Abdel Harith was carried in just before dawn. He was bleeding profusely and was in a severe state of shock. Within an hour, he was dead. According to a still unreleased autopsy report, he was beaten to death. Seventeen wounds were found on his body, including punctures with a sharp instrument. The fatal blow had been delivered by a club, to the back of his neck.

Yet no one told his family or his friends for eleven days. It was only on May 7th, at dawn, that his wife was told to come and pick up her husband's body at the central morgue. (The Ministry of the Interior later announced that Abdel Harith had died of lung failure caused by an asthma attack, and a spokesman told the press, "What do you expect the government to say? We never violate human rights. He died God's death.")

At the same time that Abdel Harith's wife received the telephone call, the S.S.I. arrested his mother-in-law, one of his cousins, and a cousin of his wife's, and they were held, virtually as hostages, until the family would agree to pick up the body and bury it immediately. But the family refused, demanding that the autopsy report be released, and that a second, independent autopsy be performed. They were backed by the powerful syndicates of lawyers and doctors—both of which, along with nearly all the syndicates, the Islamists control—and later by the American State Department, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch.

Nevertheless, the family's protest did not last long. The next evening, Abdel Harith's cousin Amir, who had spent two days at the S.S.I., returned home. He had been tortured. The following morning at dawn, the family went to the Zeinhum Morgue and retrieved the corpse.

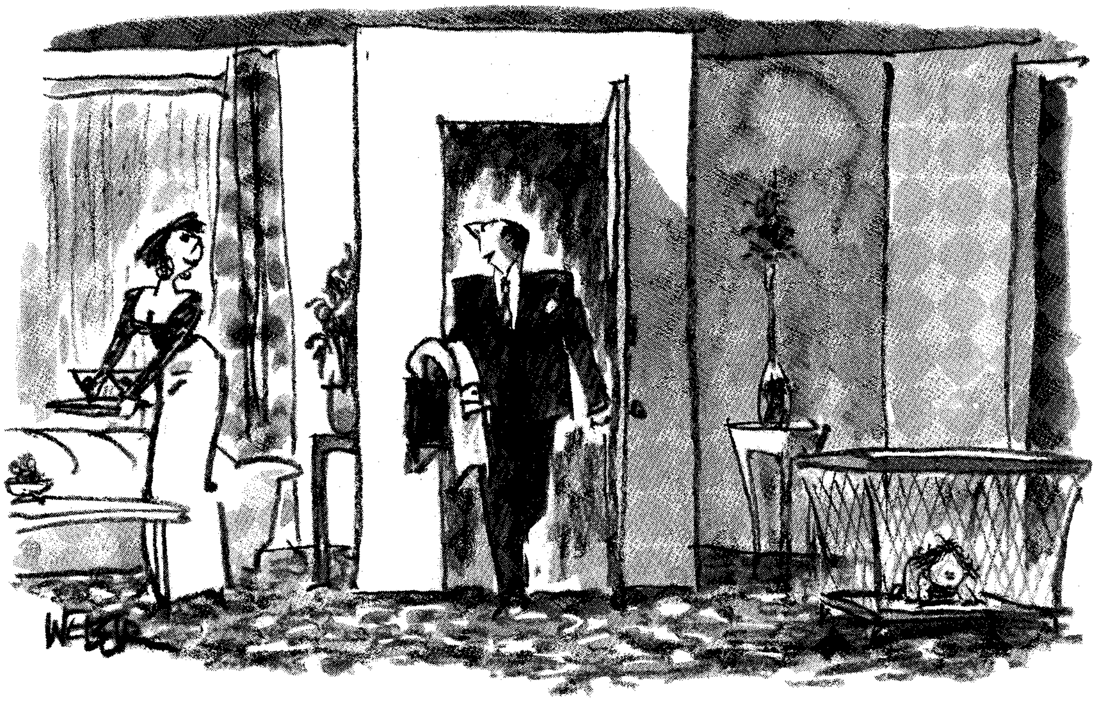
The S.S.I. had arranged a car and a plane to fly Amir and the coffin containing Abdel Harith to the tiny village of Qimaan al-Mataana, in Upper Egypt, where Abdel Harith's parents live. But neither of his parents was permitted to attend the burial; nor, for that matter, was anyone else. And the family and the villagers were warned that if they complained Abdel Harith's younger brother, Salah, who was in prison after being accused of killing an undercover S.S.I. officer in 1992, could meet the same fate that Abdel Harith had met.

The S.S.I. buried Abdel Harith in an unmarked grave in al-Mataana's cemetery, near the banks of the Nile, and for the forty days of official mourning S.S.I. officers stood guard by it. Nobody was permitted to come to pray, or to pay final respects. And every morning during the forty days the women of al-Mataana, dressed in black shawls, passing by the cemetery on their way to the village well, craned their necks forward and tried to find the grave. It was identifiable only by the presence of the security men. Otherwise, it was just a pile of stones covered with dust and sand.

DR. HUSSEIN KAMEL BAHA AL-DIN has what is probably Egypt's most difficult job. As Minister of Education, he is charged with combatting Islamic activism in the schools, where one of the fiercest battles is now being played out between the Islamists and the government. Since the days when Hassan al-Banna, a teacher, founded the Muslim Brotherhood, some seventy years ago, Egypt's twenty-five thousand schools—which have eight hundred and fifty thousand poorly paid teachers—have proved fertile ground for the spread of political Islam. In schools around the country—especially in Upper Egypt, a particular stronghold of the militant groups—the Islamists had basically seized control of the educational system, assaulting secular thought, altering school texts, and playing cassettes of radical sermons of popular sheikhs in class. And, as the battle lines have become increasingly drawn, they have most symbolically been expressed in a growing tussle over whether female students and teachers could attend classes veiled.

In 1993, Baha al-Din banned the *niqab*—a shawl-like garment that covers the face, hair, and neck—from the schools, but when, the following year, he banned the less extreme *hijab* he was, much to his astonishment, overruled by the Supreme Court. Emboldened, the Islamists have now forcefully challenged him on the *niqab*. Like so much else that is now happening in Egypt, the government's campaign against the head scarves has only served to harden the Islamists' resolve.

Just after the opening of the school year, there were demonstrations nearly



"Be there in a sec, darling. I just want to touch base with Tiffany."

every other day and, often, violent clashes, as bands of young girls dressed in *niqabs* stormed government schools. One afternoon in Imbaba, I watched a number of girls being rounded up—some as young as ten. They refused to enter a police van, because, they said, it was a symbol of the regime, but they were picked up and carried into it anyway, flailing their arms and singing verses from the Koran.

Baha al-Din had stunned Cairenes in an interview last year by saying that the Islamists had successfully infiltrated primary, preparatory, and secondary schools all over Egypt. When I visited him early one evening, in his office, I asked him to explain.

"I couldn't believe how many fundamentalist teachers we had in the schools," he said. "I've transferred more than a thousand teachers out of their jobs, and put them into administrative posts; then I went through the libraries, which were full of fundamentalist tracts, and had them all removed. And then, of course, there's the matter of the *niqab*, and the *hijab*. And this matter is a matter of actual war.

"When I tried to ban them, there was an immense uproar. Everyone fought me ferociously—the media, the teachers, al-Azhar. The fundamentalists have forced entire schools to wear the *hijab*. I found schools in which little girls as young as six, seven, eight were being forced to wear it; schools where teachers were preventing students from singing the national anthem, or saluting the flag. In other words, there was to be no national identity—only an Islamic one. Music, theatre, anything relating to the arts was being proscribed. The fundamentalists disapprove of drama clubs, so, the night of a performance, they would surround a theatre, kneeling in prayer and blocking all the entrances so that no one could get in. One woman was forced to divorce her husband because he had sent their children to a particular school. They told her that her husband was heretical.

"It's an *immense* problem," Baha al-Din went on. "The leaders of this movement are *very* well educated, and they know exactly what they want. They want to seize power, and our educational system offers them a very convenient route."

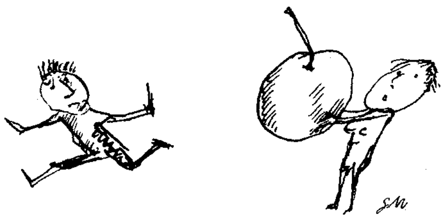
Baha al-Din refused to comment on the perceived rise of Saudi Arabia in evidence at al-Azhar—and in the Egyptian Islamist movement at large—but one of his key advisers had told me earlier that considerable amounts of Saudi money were coming in, and that they had increased substantially over the past year.

When I asked a Western diplomat later how the funding of Egypt's Islamic underground worked, he replied, "It's mostly legitimate, but it's all managed behind the scenes: through banks, insurance companies, foundations, front organizations, and mosques." What has changed over the last year or two, he said, was the increasing amount of money, in percentage terms, that was coming from Europe and the United States.

Egypt's militant Islamic groups now have support offices in some thirty countries, one Western ambassador told me. Generally, he said, these supporters work under the cover of a religious front, from which they collect money, set up organizational cells, and purchase explosives and arms—not only for the Egyptian groups but also for the Palestinian organization Hamas. I learned later, from a ranking official of the Egyptian government, that its assessment was that in 1994 over fifteen million dollars had been collected in, or channelled through, the United States. According to the official, the bulk of it had gone to Hamas.

SHEIKH OMAR ABDEL-RAHMAN, the fifty-six-year-old spiritual mentor of Gama'a, arrived in the United States, quietly and without attracting attention, in July of 1990, via Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and the Sudan, on a much-disputed tourist visa—the sixth visa he had been granted by the United States. What is perhaps as interesting as how he entered this country is why he decided to come. I had learned in Cairo that his primary purpose was to set up a United States infrastructure, a funding mechanism, and an organizational base for Egypt's militant Islamic groups.

One afternoon just before Christmas, after I returned to New York, I went to the Metropolitan Correction Center, in lower Manhattan, to meet with him, in what appeared to be a recreation room, in the prison's maximum-security ward. I was accompanied by one of the Sheikh's followers, who was acting as my interpreter and as a paralegal for the Sheikh, whose conspiracy trial would begin in Manhattan on January 9th. No sooner had we sat down, on two straight-backed chairs, than Sheikh Omar came in. He wore a blue two-piece prison uniform, brown bedroom slippers, and a pair of woolly white socks. His eyes were not covered by the heavy black glasses that he normally wears, nor was he wearing the crimson turban of al-Azhar. Instead, he had a simple white prayer cap on his head.



He greeted me cordially, and opened the conversation by telling me that his twenty-year-old son, Abdullah, had just begun his first year at al-Azhar University, where the Sheikh himself had received his Ph.D., in Islamic jurisprudence, some twenty-five years before.

I asked him how he explained the new militancy at al-Azhar.

"In my view, it isn't militancy," Sheikh Omar said. "It's just a tepid whispering that has begun. You mentioned the U.N. population conference, and the Grand Sheikh's opposition to it. But, in the final analysis, what did he *do*? We didn't see the kind of opposition that we saw from the Pope, in Rome—his opposition was very forceful. I do admire that man. He opposed this conference, and the issue of abortion, in a most positive way, and he did whatever he could to prevent this conference's taking place. Everyone in the world knew what the Catholic Church's position was, so why didn't the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar stand up and tell the world what Muslims think? No. Al-Azhar's response to this conference was not nearly adequate enough for me."

"But," I persisted, "many Egyptians believe that the al-Azhar sheikhs sense that their interpretations of Islam are being superseded by those of more militant groups, and, as a consequence, they are increasingly adopting the ideas of these groups."

"Good," the Sheikh responded. "If what you say is true." After a moment's pause, he went on, "You know, if al-Azhar had not neglected its duty, had it not become only a mouthpiece of the government, had it implemented Islamic Sharia law, you would not see any Islamic groups, like Gama'a, working as they are now. They wouldn't even *exist*, for it was only after al-Azhar forfeited its historical role that all these groups began popping up to fill the void. Every Islamic group working in Egypt now is trying to fill a vacuum created by al-Azhar."

I asked him to give me an example, and he replied, "In the area of education, for one; but, most important, in the implementation of Sharia law. I can assure you, the moment that al-Azhar begins doing what it is supposed to do you will no longer see any of these Islamic activist groups."

As the Sheikh continued talking, he appeared at ease, rocking back and forth in his chair, his long white beard resting on his chest. He apologized that he could not offer me tea or soda, explaining that he was not permitted to carry money in his prison uniform.

I asked Sheikh Omar if, in his view, the attack on Naguib Mahfouz was justified.

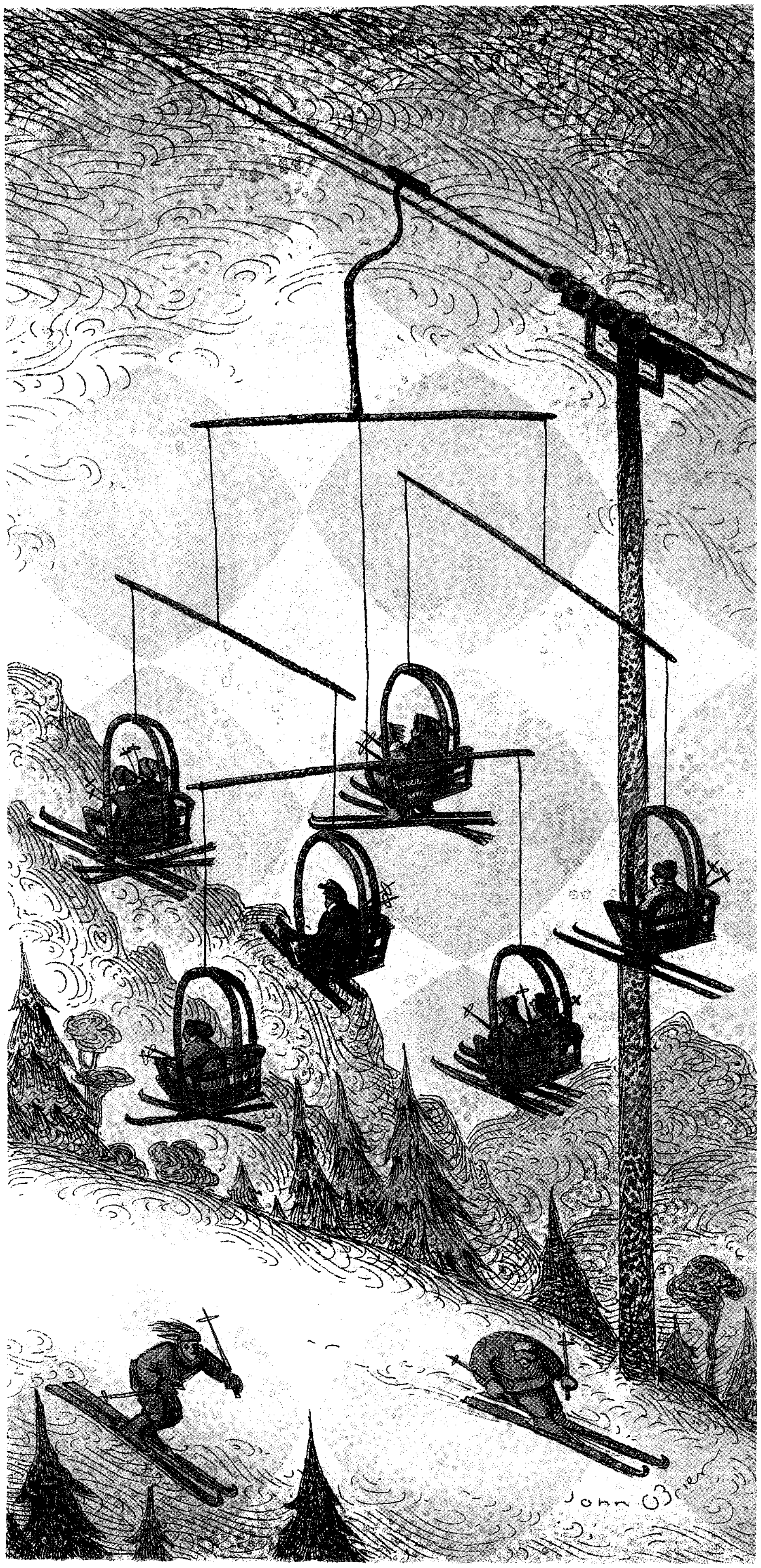
"I don't know the circumstances, but it all seems a bit strange," he said. "It could be just another government trick to anger the people. Naguib Mahfouz has been around for years, and if our youth wanted to attack him they would have done it long ago. The main question I have is, Why now? They've charged sixteen people. It's unbelievable! They say sixteen people were needed, just to scratch a man on his neck with a knife. Now they will court-martial them all, and within a month they'll be dead. And no one will know, not even their lawyers, what really happened to Naguib Mahfouz."

"Are you absolutely certain that this attack was not carried out by Gama'a?" I asked.

"This is what I think," he replied. "Naguib Mahfouz is not a target for the Islamists. As I said before, we know where he sits, where he walks. When the pressure on the Islamic groups was not nearly as great as it is now, when they were more or less able to freely move about, they never attacked Mahfouz. So, why now? And what could they hope to accomplish by killing him, anyhow?"

"It has been reported that you issued a *fatwa* against Mahfouz, by declaring him an apostate," I said.

"No, no, no," he replied, and his voice began to rise. "This whole matter is *so* misunderstood. What I said—and this was when 'The Satanic Verses' was making headlines—was, if we had punished



Naguib Mahfouz for what he wrote in 'Children of Gebelaawi,' then Salman Rushdie never would have dared to write that book. This was a reply, to a question asked by a journalist. It was a reply, an opinion. It was *not* a *fatwa*."

"How should Mahfouz have been punished?" I asked.

"You've got to understand the rule of Sharia law," Sheikh Omar replied. "Al-Azhar should have brought Mahfouz before a committee where he would have been judged. He would have had an opportunity to defend himself, and, if found guilty, he would have been given an opportunity to repent. But under Islamic law any Muslim who is found to be an apostate has no other option: he *must* repent."

"And if he doesn't?"

"Then he will be executed," Sheikh Omar said.

He stopped for a moment, and then he went on, "You personally, and others in the West, may not like this; you may find it harsh. But this is our religion; it is the rule of God."

For a few moments, neither of us said anything more.

Before I left Cairo, I had asked a foreign diplomat what he anticipated was going to happen in Egypt next, and he had replied, "Egypt is not Algeria, at least not yet. There it's a civil war; here it's guerrilla attacks. But should widespread violence and unrest break out, then the key question is, What will the Army's reaction be, for it is Mubarak's only real constituency. I suspect he will keep the troops in the barracks for as long as he can, for there are many who doubt whether the Army will fire on civilians to support an increasingly unpopular government."

Last year, there had been at least one court-martial—and probably two—of junior officers charged with plotting to assassinate President Mubarak. (The officers were subsequently executed by firing squad.) It was the realization of the government's worst nightmare.

So I now asked Sheikh Omar what the Islamists' strength in the Army was.

He hesitated, and didn't reply directly. Instead, choosing his words carefully, he said, "That is a very difficult question, which no one can answer right now. And, even if I knew, obviously I would not tell *The New Yorker*—which divisions, where, and how much—and allow the Egyptian government to finish them off. What I can say is that, in addition to the courts-martial, there have been at least three trials of civilians this year, in which some of the defendants were officers or cadets from the military academy." (According to defense lawyers, there were thirteen.)

"Before I forget, Detrick, here's the dental plan."

Sheikh Omar had been animated during our interview, but now he began to fidget in his chair. In an hour or so, he told me, he was meeting with former United States Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who is heading his defense team.

"One more question," he said.

I asked him what, in his view, was the most likely scenario for the Islamists to come to power in Egypt, if they do.

"Be specific," the Sheikh said. "Give me your choices."

I did. A growing number of Egyptians and foreign diplomats had come to believe that if parliamentary elections, which will take place in October, are free and fair, the Islamists, led by the Muslim Brotherhood, would probably win. I now said to the Sheikh that it seemed to me that the three most logical scenarios were: elections; a military coup; or mass demonstrations and chaos on the streets.

"Forget about elections," he replied. "As long as this government is in power, they will *never* be free or fair. Every election in which Mubarak has stood, he has won by ninety-nine per cent. Has this ever happened to an American President? As far as a coup is concerned, the Egyptian Army is now under unprecedented surveillance and security. Military intelligence has set up a new arm—it's called the Seventy-Fifth Group—and its sole purpose is to monitor junior officers and new recruits. And that monitoring tells me that there is something to be worried about. But, nevertheless, the moment they discover anyone who prays, who reads the Koran, who observes Islamic rituals, they are weeded out; thus, through attrition, they are trying to deplete the ranks."

"So," he went on, "we've eliminated two of the three choices, and the last one is the most viable for me: for people to rise up, and go to the streets. You've seen the disaffection all over Egypt—we *control* the bar association, yet when lawyers demonstrate they are beaten back with tear gas and clubs. We *control* the student unions at the universities, yet the representatives are being carted off to jail. And the students, like the lawyers, are *elected* representatives. Blue-collar workers have been striking more than ever before. Everyone, from the extreme right to the extreme left, has lost faith in this regime;

on every level of society, people are in conflict with this regime."

He stood up and walked me to the door, ringing a button for a guard to see me out. He seemed confident, even puckish, and I was struck by the realization that, for over a year, Sheikh Omar had been in jail. Yet even from a prison in the United States he was better informed on what was happening in Egypt than many Egyptians were.

BEFORE I left Cairo, I had called on President Hosni Mubarak in the Presidential palace, in Heliopolis, some ten miles from the center of town, where he had set up his primary office. To walk through the palace's high-ceilinged halls, resplendent in marble, alabaster, and gold, is to enter a vanished world of monarchs and colonial powers, seemingly cut off from the rest of Egypt.

The sixty-six-year-old Mubarak is well aware of the risks involved in leaving the palace grounds. As Vice-President, he had been sitting only a few seats away from Sadat on the afternoon of October 6, 1981, watching a military parade, when machine-gun fire began. In forty-five seconds, Sadat was dead, along with ten others. Mubarak, a cautious, self-effacing man, who was a former fighter pilot and later the Commander of the Egyptian Air Force, had seemed an unlikely choice when Sadat appointed him Vice-President, in 1975. The day after Sadat's assassination, he was sworn in as only the third President in Egypt's history. It was a job that he had never aspired to, and never really wanted, he told friends.

Yet he consolidated his power, retired potential rivals, and, by scrupulously maintaining the status quo, managed to stay ahead of the three-hundred-thousand-man Army, whose leaders are the arbiters of power in Egypt, and have been for more than forty years. But, according to his critics, he grew increasingly out of touch in recent years, surrounding himself with sycophants and old military friends, and issuing increasingly authoritarian decrees, in the same manner that doomed the Egyptian monarchy. His inability, or unwillingness, to come to grips with the monumental problems that Egypt faces has led to a widespread perception that the Arab world's largest country is badly adrift.

"Look, I'm not talking about a lifetime commitment. I'm talking about marriage."

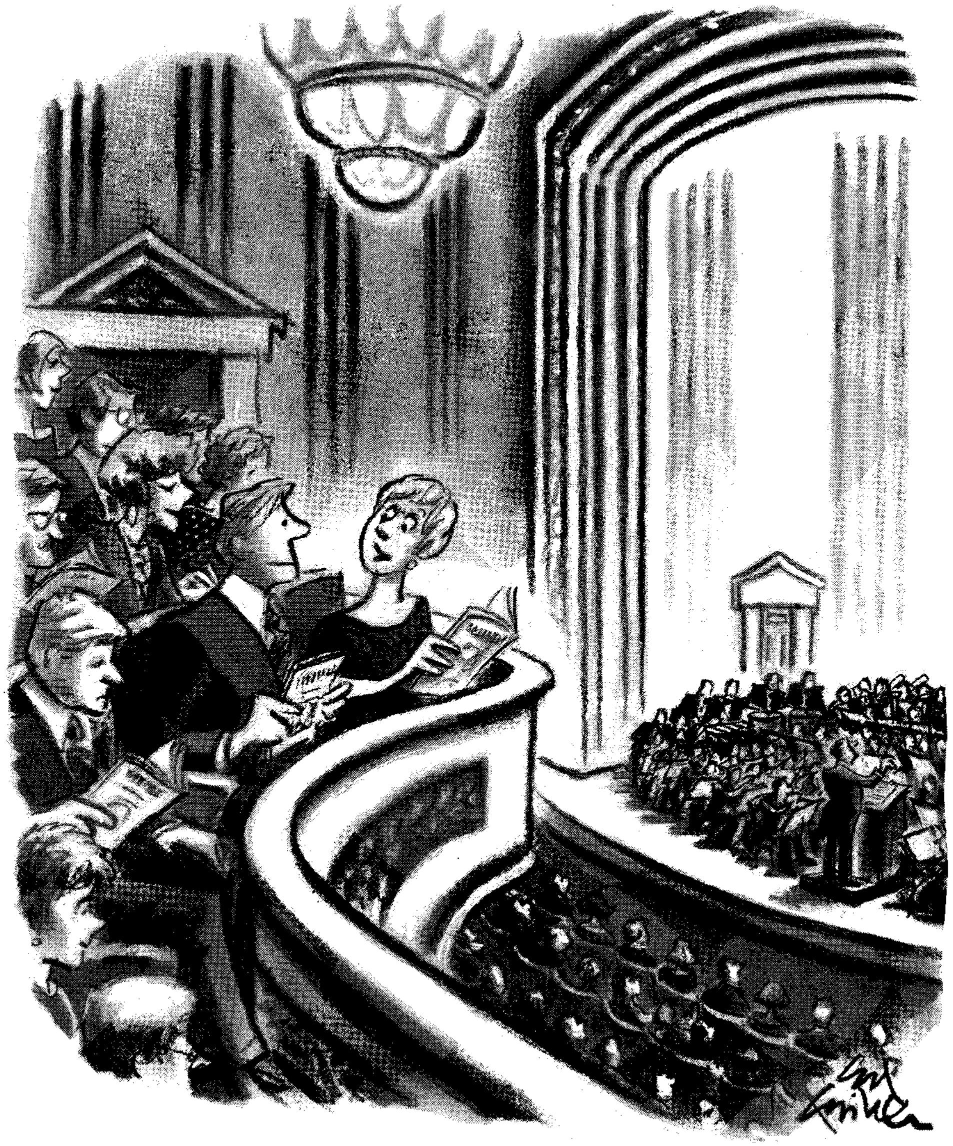
All that I had heard about Mubarak led me to expect a disillusioned man. He doesn't take pressure well, I was told, and tends to withdraw into himself. Only a few days earlier, he had met with President Clinton, who had stopped in Cairo en route to the signing of the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel. The meeting had not gone well, according to all accounts, and the Egyptian government had begun to sense that American foreign policy in the Middle East was no longer as inextricably tied to Cairo as it once had been.

There had also been a disaster in Upper Egypt a few days after Clinton left, in which some six hundred people died when blazing fuel from an Army depot was carried by flash floods through a small town. Two years earlier, when Cairo was hit by a devastating earthquake, the government had dithered while Islamist groups rushed in with relief. Mubarak was determined that that would not happen again. But the government stumbled, and every stumble was pounced upon.

Security at the Presidential palace was unprecedented when I arrived. The outer foyer bristled with electronic equipment and metal scans. After some time, I was escorted into the private office of the President. As Mubarak greeted me, and indicated that I should sit on a large gilded sofa to the left of his elegant armchair, his manner was confident, even ebullient. After an exchange of pleasantries, I asked Mubarak what concerned him most about the problems facing Egypt today.

"Our main concern is the economy," he said in English, "and we're working hard on economic reform. I suppose you're asking that question because of the [Islamic] fanatics here. They're nothing to worry about. We're used to this in Egypt; it goes up and down. And, frankly, I must tell you, this whole problem of terrorism throughout the Middle East is a by-product of our own, illegal Muslim Brotherhood—whether it's al-Jihad, Hizbollah, in Lebanon, or Hamas. They all sprang from underneath the umbrella of the Muslim Brotherhood. They say they have renounced violence, but, in reality, they are responsible for all this violence, and the time will come when they will be uncovered." He went on to imply that a severe crackdown on the Brotherhood was imminent.

As we continued talking, Mubarak expressed both irritation and concern over what he considered to be the passive attitude of Western governments, particularly those of Britain, Germany, and the United States, in allowing



"This one's contemporary: 'Recapturing an ecstatic vision in the young composer's mind, brought on by a carbohydrate binge.' "

Egypt's militant Islamic groups to operate freely from their soil. But he voiced his greatest concern—rage, really—over the veterans of the United States-sponsored Afghanistan war.

"Nearly all those who are committing these crimes, these acts of violence, were trained on the battlefield of Afghanistan," he said. "They are now re-infiltrating, all over the Middle East. They have training, money, and arms, and they're now looking for a new cause. The problem of violence in this country began when the first man returned from Afghanistan. Before that, there was a dialogue between the Gama'a al-Islamiya and the government."

When I asked him if he could give me details, he hesitated, and then said that he would prefer not to.

A number of Western diplomats had told me earlier that they were troubled by mounting evidence not only of coöperation between Egypt's militant Islamic groups and Hamas but of recurring reports that the Egypt-Gaza frontier had, for all intents and purposes, become a cordon sanitaire for the smuggling of weapons and men, and the transfer of funds, in and out of Yasir Arafat's beleaguered Palestinian autonomous zone. I asked Mubarak how concerned he was about the breakdown of law and order in the Gaza Strip.

"I'm concerned, of course," he replied. "The last thing we want is to have the ghost of Afghanistan haunting us again—and, this time, right across our border, in the Gaza Strip. And, I must be absolutely frank; the failure of the Palestinian Governing Authority, and of Yasir Arafat, not only will set us back by fifty years but there will be *terrorism everywhere!* My own fear is that if there is a delay in the process, if Arafat fails, all these extremists, all these terrorists trained in Afghanistan, will rush to Gaza and join Hamas. It will be a *disaster,* and create one hell of a problem for us."

From time to time during my interview with Mubarak, which lasted two hours, he seemed bewildered, then annoyed, by some of my questions—concerning, for example, the increasingly iconoclastic behavior of the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar, and the incommunicado detention of prisoners in the Scorpion—and broke into Arabic with his Minister of Information, who was sitting next to me. I wondered if it was possible, as I had been told by some of his aides, that Mubarak genuinely didn't know many of the things that were happening in Egypt, though they were happening in his name.

One of his top advisers had told me earlier that, in his view, the main irony surrounding the Middle East's militant Islamic groups was that all of them had been spawned by the leaders of the region themselves: Gama'a was a creation of Egyptian intelligence to counter the left; Hamas was a creation of Israeli intelligence to undermine the P.L.O.; and the Arab-Afghanis, as the veterans of the Afghan war are called, were created by the C.I.A. and Saudi intelligence. And, as the contacts among these various Islamic groups increased, there was a growing resentment toward the United States; for it was Washington, in Egypt's view, that was most responsible for creating what the adviser called a hydra-headed monster on the battlefields of Afghanistan, yet had then refused to assist threatened Arab governments in putting the genie back into the bottle again.

So I asked Mubarak how much responsibility, in his view, the government of the United States—and that of Egypt—bore for the creation of today's militant Islamic groups.

He remained quiet for a moment, and then he replied, without answering, "Yes, Sadat was responsible for the formation of Gama'a. He was badly advised, and he made a big mistake. But, I must tell you, even though this group calls itself Gama'a al-Islamiya, it is *not* Islamic. None of them are: they have nothing to do with Islam. They want to seize power, pure and simple, and who are they? Belly dancers and drummers from the slums. The man who tried to assassinate Naguib Mahfouz knows nothing about the Koran; he knows nothing about praying. He was simply paid to do what he did. It's all a matter of money."

"Who is paying them?" I asked.

"The financing is coming from different places," he replied. "These people have their contacts in Paris, Germany, Switzerland. They move about, from here to there. And, thanks to modern technology, they make bank transfers by wire, and run the movement by conference calls and fax."

"What about the United States?" I asked.

It was clear that he was angry and bitter, even before he spoke.

"Your government is in contact with these *terrorists* from the Muslim Brotherhood," he replied. "This has all been done very secretly, without our knowledge at first. You think you can correct the mistakes that you made in Iran, where you had no contact with the Ayatollah Khomeini and *his* fanatic groups before they seized power. But, I can assure you, these groups will *never* take over this country; and they will never be on good terms with the United States. These contacts will never be of any benefit to you, or to any other country which supports these groups."

A year or so ago, Mubarak had told a group of Egyptian editors that Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman was a paid agent of the C.I.A., and I now asked him if he still held that belief.

He replied that he did, and when I asked him why, he responded that he had read it in the New York *Times*. (Not surprisingly, the Sheikh denied the allegation and told me that when Mubarak made the original charge "even Warren Christopher denied that it was true.")

When Mubarak had first assumed office, he did more to bring about democracy than most Egyptians thought he would. But then, having doled out certain freedoms, he began reining them in. Now his government, according to international human-rights organizations, has one of the most abusive records anywhere. So I asked the President if it wasn't a mistake to treat the Islamic movement as strictly a law-and-order problem, and, in the process, come under criticism around the world.

"I do not have one political prisoner in my jails," he said. "Everyone there is a criminal, who has engaged in criminal acts. Not once have I ever arrested anyone for their political beliefs. Yet the moment anyone is picked up, somebody immediately sends a fax to Amnesty International. And most of these human-rights organizations abroad get their information from a so-called human-rights organization here, which is controlled by members of the former"—Nasser—"regime, and is stacked with people from the Muslim Brotherhood."

He had begun shouting, and paused to take a deep breath.

I used the occasion to ask him when the autopsy report on Abdel Harith Madani's death—which had been requested by President Clinton's aides—would be made public.

He leaned across a table toward me, and his face hardened.

"*Why* is there such a big fuss about Abdel Harith Madani?" he asked, and his voice began to rise. "What about the human rights of the women and children that these people kill? *Madani was a criminal!* And those who say they're looking out for human rights are only looking out for criminals' rights. They never ask about the innocent people who have been killed in the streets. There's no balance at all! What about Naguib Mahfouz? What about his rights? What about the woman who lost all her sons—two in the wars, and one at the hands of these terrorists. *What about her*? She cannot *have* any more children. Till this day, when I see her on TV, I cannot look at her face."

The President leaned back in his chair, looking suddenly beleaguered and tired. Then he said, seemingly to no one in particular, "We are in a mess."

NAGUIB MAHFOUZ has now left the Police Hospital and has resumed his normal life, moving from café to café. The only difference is that, much to his irritation, he is now surrounded by a phalanx of five heavily armed security men.

A few weeks after the attack on him, "Children of Gebelaawi" was serialized in the Egyptian press. It was done without his permission and, to the best of everyone's knowledge, without the permission of al-Azhar. Mahfouz was furious, and told friends that the re-publication of the banned novel was tantamount to "a second assassination attempt."

The controversy began when the Minister of Information—with television cameras in tow—appeared at Mahfouz's bedside, and declared that the government did not support a ban on any of his works. No one was certain—including Mahfouz himself—whether the Minister's statement ended the prohibition or not.

The evening that I visited Mahfouz in his hospital room, when I asked him what he thought, he merely shook his head and said, "I asked that the publication come at a later time, if the book was to be re-published at all."

"Who do you hold responsible for the attack on you?" I asked.

He answered without hesitation, "The system, not the young man. The young man who attacked me didn't know anything about 'Children of Gebelaawi.' He had never read the book."

I asked Mahfouz what troubled him most about the situation in Egypt now.

"All the young men, like the one who attacked me," he replied. "We have alienated an entire generation—our most precious commodity, our youth."

"You've told your friends that young people today don't have the same chances that your generation did," I said.

Mahfouz smiled sadly, and nodded his head.

"Can you explain that?" I asked.

He was silent for a moment, and then he turned toward me and said, "We sat in the coffeehouses, late into the night, and discussed the world. We didn't have to worry about what life would bring us the following day. Our economic situation was far better, and we had more democratic rights. We could choose any political party, and we could choose our government. Some of us even had the hope to be in that government. We had the hope to rule, and to have a chance." He paused for a moment, and then he said, "But the young men of today don't have our hopes, or our opportunities. They also don't have our dreams." ♦

Vox populist: Nowadays we see Winchell's flaunted readiness for a fight in Bob Dole, Newt Gingrich, and Rush Limbaugh, in the practice of an American politics of the impolitic.

A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE LAST WORD ON WINCHELL

After all the discussion of Walter Winchell's power, a mystery remains: Why did the disreputable Everyman whose voice gave rise to the new America that Franklin Delano Roosevelt built suddenly surrender it all?

BY HAROLD BRODKEY

I SUPPOSE what I mind most in this country at this moment is its implacable gullibility, its pseudo-hard-hitting, impassioned credulity. Take the instance of Walter Winchell, a newsman who had great journalistic power and success over several decades. Men who became movie stars—Cagney and Bogart—modelled their styles and their approaches to roles and their voices on his persona. Movies ("Okay America") were written about him. He was extraordinarily public—as visible and audible as President Roosevelt. Pretty much at the height of his fame, he began to crack up, bit by bit. And, bit by bit, he sneaked off the stage into near-oblivion as a rich, somewhat nutty old-guy Jewish businessman with no special role in history—you know the type, unclear about who they are and what they did, and inclined to simplify?

He wrote an autobiography, which was published posthumously, but left no coherent account of his tremendous popularity and its effect on the country. Neal Gabler, in his new book, "Winchell: Gossip, Power and the Culture of Celebrity" (Knopf; $30), tells us, "By one estimate, fifty million Americans—out of an adult population of roughly seventy-five million—either listened to his weekly radio broadcast or read his daily column, which, at its height in the late thirties and forties, was syndicated in more than two thousand newspapers; it was, according to one observer, the 'largest continuous audience ever possessed by a man who was neither politician nor divine.' " Another estimate of Winchell's audience, in the 1943 edition of Current Biography, puts the number of readers and listeners at twenty-seven million, and another source has the number of papers syndicating his column at around eight hundred. Winchell and his contemporaries knew that he was popular, but no one could ever quite prove or measure his political or cultural power except in terms of circulation figures. Susan Sontag made the formulation to me that, in America, once you were famous you were famous until you died, but your status went up and down all the time. Winchell's status was never high. One can say that, well, Jews and women rarely had status in those days, but some did: Supreme Court Justice Benjamin Cardozo and Pearl Buck, for example. And such figures as Sinclair Lewis and Lou Gehrig and Ronald Colman had status in spite of being popular.

RICHARD MERKIN

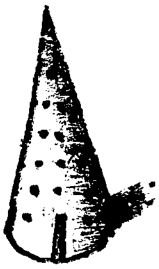
During the years before the Second World War, the chief thing about Winchell was that he was not respectable at a time when respectability was a cultural and moral essential. He had charm (of a kind) and a rare sense of excitement and drama. He was a truth-teller of a folkish sort, a sniffer-outer, a tipster, with his nose in the wind. His column often consisted of items gleaned from late-night cruising, chasing after New York City cops when they were called to crime scenes (he had a shortwave radio in his car, and a special arrangement with the police). Or he sat and drank at the Stork Club, picking up bits of gossip. His snarling and cynical and opinionated manner, his flaunted readiness for a fight, we see nowadays in Bob Dole, Newt Gingrich, and Rush Limbaugh, in the practice of an American politics of the impolitic: a form of realism.

Winchell didn't invent the modern gossip column, as Gabler and others assert. Gossip in the press predates him by at least half a century. What he did was revivify a dying form. He made it commercially viable on a grand scale. As for a "culture of celebrity," there is no culture without some sort of celebrity. Modern celebrity may have been invented in Paris during the French Revolution, with the sudden importance of the other-than-the-aristocratic. The public statement of thinly substantiated private information precedes the invention of the printing press. It goes back at least as far as Aristophanes. The cult of personal fame was perhaps given its modern form by Sarah Bernhardt.

Winchell grew up in Manhattan and left school after the sixth grade. He does not seem to have been educated or protected by his family or to have belonged to a family tradition. He began writing in 1919, in order to break the boredom of a national tour in second-string vaudeville houses. He was a singer and a dancer—a hoofer. He wrote a one-page news sheet offering information for other performers about whatever town he was in. At some point, he added "gossip," stuff about people, and found a market in trade papers. He spent two years free-lancing and two more years as a full-time reporter for something called *Vaudeville News*. He already had a following in 1924, when he moved to a regular New York paper—well, not so regular. The New York *Evening Graphic* was published by a rich health-food and exercise nut named Bernarr Macfadden. Winchell's column was a mixture of elements, and he was more popular than the paper itself. In 1929, he moved to the New York *Daily Mirror*—a Hearst paper, not a respectable paper—and again he was more popular than it was. His bosses there could not tell him what to do. They could interfere with his copy, but he had the clout to fight them. He had a very cheap operation. He always said that he didn't pay for tips from informants. He stayed at the *Mirror* for more than thirty years, which is inexplicable except as an act of independence—a street person's independence.

Winchell became the most famous columnist in America and in the world, and no one owned him. Hemingway wrote, "Winchell is the greatest newspaperman that ever lived." But his writing isn't easy to come by nowadays. Gabler tells us in the "Note on Sources" at the end of his book, "I bought Winchell's own bound volumes of his *Mirror* columns, the complete scripts of his radio programs. . . . I have donated all of this to the Billy Rose Theatre Collection at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, where it is currently being catalogued (hence the inexactness of many of the citations)." Winchell's status is, apparently, still low.

WINCHELL was a Gatsby type, but he was compulsively talkative and he had no social aspirations—on the contrary, he was sought after by social figures. He had no Daisy Buchanan. He liked showgirls—classless, spirited, and, again, without social aspirations. The party was in night clubs—was wherever he was, so to speak. His view of society, which society down to its lower levels found so persuasive and so detestable, was genital. He believed in the moral hairsplitting and fineness of the upper caste as pictured in Henry James to about the same extent that we believe Bill Clinton to be a virgin.



The tone of social skepticism in Winchell was a large part of what made his columns and broadcasts work. Here's a sample from the early thirties, which was quoted by St. Clair McKelway, in this magazine, in a 1940 Profile. The two items appeared four days apart:

> Mrs. J. Loose who has more money than her Loose-Wiles plants have biscuits and Vice-President Curtis are blazing.
>
> The line on Monday about Vice-President Curtis and Mrs. Loose of the biscuit company "blazing" . . . Well, the Trib yesterday refuted it by saying that Mr. Curtis denied he was engaged or going to marry . . . Who said anything about engaged or marriage? Can't a vice-president get That Way about a girl without marrying her?

This disrespect became part of the thirties—part of the style of the decade. From early on Roosevelt was allied with Winchell and his audience. Roosevelt came into office with the help of radio and national touring, and the help of big-city machines and bosses and Southerners. The United States after the Second World War—the nation that was said to have Americanized the world—was a Roosevelt (and Winchell) creation, and was not the old or traditional America at all.

When I was young, you had two major social classes (as now again, since Reagan): the people who mattered and the trash population. If you like, you can name a third class, of those uneasily in the middle, but actually behind their façades of respectability they fit into one of the two other categories. You had a country two to three times larger in population than England or France or Germany, but much less well organized or centralized. People had root cellars and iceboxes, and no down coats, and Washington was a small Southern town. Almost every populated center had a large belt of farms near it, and there was an urban-rural multiculturalism underlying our politics. Ethnic divisions were extreme and often violent. We had little, compared to today, in the way of *national* structures—just the railroads, the radio networks, a few newspaper chains, such as Hearst's, and the "national" magazines. There were also national political parties, but the most fervent politics remained local—the province of local sheriffs and judges and newspapers. People were not as nomadic, and they stuck with their jobs, and the local storekeepers and police knew you. (This led to a terrific amount of sexual freedom if you were "respectable.") Sears, Roebuck and Montgomery Ward and the five-and-dime may have been all you had in terms of national merchandising. Most of the roads had been laid out for horse and buggy, and some took right-angle turns to follow property lines. Where I grew up, in the Midwest, some country roads were made of brick. (I've always thought that the yellow brick road in "The Wizard of Oz" was a wet brick road between cornfields, reflecting sunshine.)

The rich, the people who mattered, were (with some exceptions) arrivistes, newcomers to power since the Civil War. They were terrifically genteel—at times. Gentility was a constant issue. Various groups at the top of the heap covered for one another. Much of the fiction of the time—not James but Edith Wharton and Theodore Dreiser—spoke of this hypocrisy.

Newspapers *were* power and blackmail: they printed scandal, often unsubstantiated. The careful newspapers were always few in number. America was not gentlemanly except as a quality of longing. I was adopted by a family that was well known in a small Illinois town called Alton. The adoption was not, I think, legal. My adoptive mother was a Daisy Buchanan type—although Jewish—and once, when she had me with her and couldn't find a parking spot, she left her car in the middle of the street, blocking a trolley line, and told the traffic cop to take care of it, and he did. When we moved to St. Louis, in 1934, we had no connections, and even as a young child I could feel the difference. Joe Brodkey, my adoptive father, used to go back to Alton once a week just to sniff the memories of the time when we had been *influential* and had had *position.*

Winchell allied himself with actors (who had been considered outcasts and somewhat disreputable) and then with journalists and gangsters. He had nothing to do with respectable America, and the national audience, such as it was, had no interest in respectable America, either. It went to the movies, followed big-league baseball, listened to "Amos and Andy" on the radio. Let's call it a kind of social self-consciousness, an individual and mass identification with Chaplin's tramp—which was an identification of oneself as a nobody, as someone not in the loop. (In truth, though, everyone was in some sort of loop in those days, through ward politics or an ethnic organization or church or the PTA. Or one had access to the upper-level loop through marriage or town gossip.) As a disreputable figure who said what he liked, Winchell was part of an American tradition: the poor and actors had always been subject to gossip, and so had Democratic Party politicians, as far back as Andrew Jackson and his much insulted wife, Rachel.

The thing about going back in history is that it is difficult to keep your sense of scale. If everything in the past is like a toy, then the scale is wrong. In actuality, people were people then, and the future was unknown. The twenties' high-literary sense of life as a party for cynical depressives—which you find in Hemingway and Fitzgerald and in Edna St. Vincent Millay and, in a night-clubbing and emotional sense, in Winchell—meant a flight from small-town existence, from that violence and peace, from encountering your peers in church or at meetings of the Elks. It meant rejecting your parents. The party was sophisticated, a rendezvous at the edge of Hell—outside the law, outside of Prohibition. Winchell kept this sense of a party through much of his working life. (Hemingway and Fitzgerald did, too, writing about it in ways that tried to reflect eternity in willful and giddy transience, and you can use your sense of Hemingway and Fitzgerald to picture Winchell, use their exhaustion and Hemingway's reputed insanity to imagine his.)

My guess is that the source of Winchell's famous style—his swiftness and nastiness and outspokenness—was the Bible, with its air of truth. Winchell's idea of a story was Jezebel in five lines. He used no schooled rhetoric at all. His riffs depended on rhythm, brevity, and mocking parody, in ways reminiscent of song lyrics and vaudeville. Not simply because his work was entertainment but because in a country with so many ethnic divisions and a maddening variety of manners of speech, show-biz vernacular was the only common language.

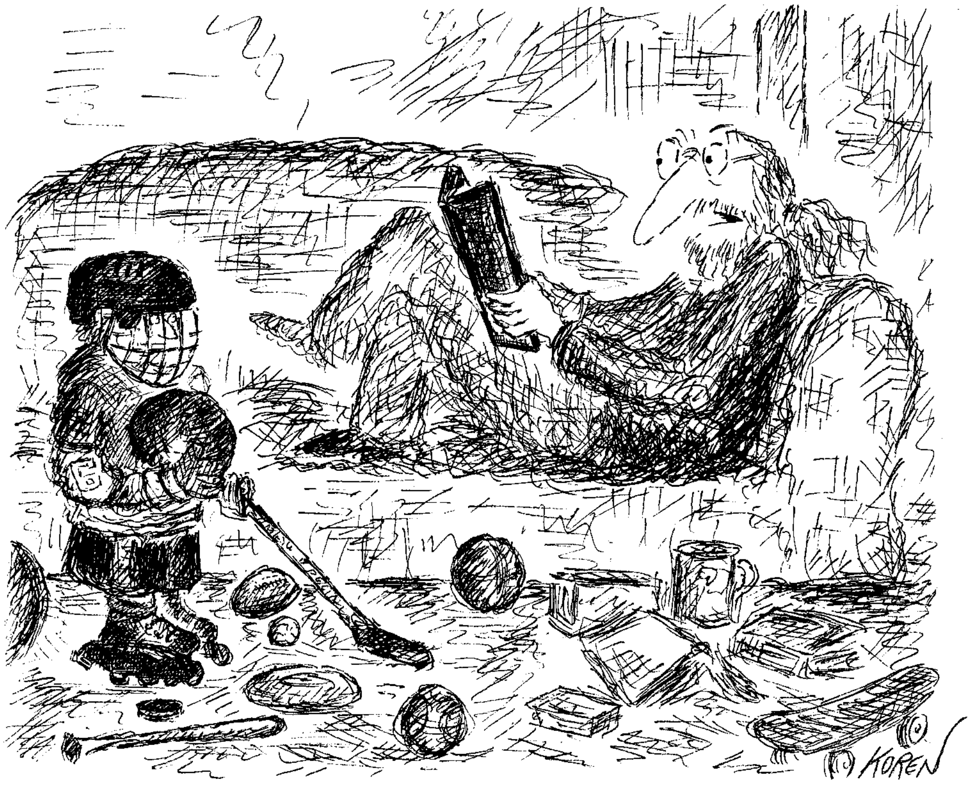
Winchell *was* show biz, was a placeless American, someone who could not be kept down on the farm after he'd seen Paree. And his homemade journalistic jazz vernacular was not a language that could claim correctness or purity any more than twenties clothes could. Such language was used to separate the "lowdown" on someone from the "truth" about someone. "Truth" was fancy and hypocritical. The "lowdown" was the opposite. It was not a language for Congress. It was not imposed. It was noncoercive, and it was defiant or defensive, impudent, sassy, and vulgarly subject to self-will, which is to say style.

Winchell's razzmatazz, which depends for its effect on rapid changes of attention—he could cover fifty topics in a single brief column—has a modern-day counterpart in rap, since rap is, among other things, opinion filtered through show business and personal style. When his influence was at its strongest (from, say, 1932 to 1942), his style was tough baby talk à la Bogart and was more formulaic than it had been in the twenties: "It was the first party I had gone to since I got my long pants and some sense, but it was all veddy lifted-pinky and ho-ho rather than ho-hum." Pure high-flying gutter. And no one is left out. Winchell (I think) never wrote from a posture of superiority. Both his lack of power and his enormous influence come from the fact that he was shouting "Listen!" and then pointing to F.D.R. or someone else whose speech had authority. He was more doorway than podium, more carnival barker than the show itself.

In Gabler we find this: "It was Dorothy Parker who once quipped, 'Poor Walter. He's afraid he'll wake up one day and discover he's not Walter Winchell.' " Of course, Parker's quip depends for its point on Winchell's immense popularity. I seem to remember that Parker, very drunk, sometimes said, "My tragedy is that I am not Dorothy Parker, and I never was." (She once said to me, "Stop looking at me. I'm old and dull. I'm not funny anymore. You want me to be funny. Leave me alone.") Winchell's constructed persona was based on his being truant, on his autonomy, and it granted us, the citizen audience, our autonomy. It was all a massive dose of liberation. Winchell didn't deal in dead men's and women's greatness and in memories of greatness. He was absolutely topical. Now. Our lives. Winchell's two great interests—the structures that underlay the popularity of his work—were sexual reality and conspiracies. His métier was the folksy deconstruction of officialdom and of lies about class differences. He had a fine sense of headlines. He didn't tell the "truth" except in a sportive or arch manner, and even then he didn't do it because he was truthful by nature. He dealt in other people's lies. J. Edgar Hoover is said to have assigned agents to listen to Winchell, because he had so much information.

Gabler presents one especially vivid detail about Winchell talking on the radio: Winchell liked to broadcast with his pants undone. Exhibitionism? A kinky reaction to the splendors of radio fame? According to Winchell, it added to his already terrible nervousness, his stage-fright, and helped increase the urgency and drama of his voice on his broadcasts. His vocal pitch was an octave higher than usual when he was on the air. Winchell's verbal style—its childishness—was like the childishness of Hemingway's and Gertrude Stein's styles, and like Fitzgerald's juvenile tone, and like the scowls of gangsters. It was a late-night style, and his "friendships" were late-night, too—were with Mark Hellinger and Texas Guinan and Damon Runyon and Sherman Billingsley. Texas Guinan may have been the inventor of having a party sense of life without illusion. She was the one who used to greet people in her speakeasy with "Hello, sucker."

Gabler says that Winchell dealt in



"For the last time—Daddy doesn't do sports."

implication and fey language rather than stock journalese in order to avoid lawsuits, since it was difficult to pin down an implication. Winchell often said that he had been trying to hide his illiteracy. But if you consider his sense of conspiracy and of sexual shenanigans, and also his distrust of high style (as British) and his use of a low, invented style, and consider his popularity, you can see that he had great literary impact. Writers who were growing up when Winchell flourished—Thomas Pynchon and Norman Mailer and Don DeLillo—show his influence. You can also see the shadow of his shadow in Peter Matthiessen's novels and Richard Ford's and Robert Stone's and Cynthia Ozick's, but in those writers the derivation is diluted by faith and by a stylistic denial of contemporary speech and by a noticeable literariness, a claim of not having arisen from the vernacular.

ZOO STORY

It *could* have been the soul of my dead mother
I recognized quite accidentally
in the eyes of an Asian elephant cow.
That body shrugged toward me like a boulder
set to run downhill. The trunk idled with a listless
delicacy over dirty straw,
pinkly inquisitive. I heard a sigh.
I do not believe in metempsychosis;
yet, in a temple lobed and domed most strangely,
I mourned again, and worshipped after her,
buried in this landslide of a creature,
its crushing, dreamlike step, its slack repose,
its gaze, deep as the past or the hereafter,
swaying through counts of years, steady on me.

—Karl Kirchwey

What Winchell signified by leaving home and being himself and deracinated and outside a tradition—by being accepted and hated and reconstituted as a person of unique influence—was the effectual savagery of freedom. Not many of the *good* writers of Winchell's time were concerned with such freedom; they advocated religious and political dogmas and self-sacrifice. Winchell's individualism was urban, just as Ezra Pound's was Western and rural: Pound's country-boy dialect and his knowingness, his hot scoops on high culture, come from the same roots in a provincial society as Winchell's patter. Where Pound chose T. S. Eliot and Mussolini, Winchell chose Roosevelt.

Winchell's phenomenal daily and weekly popularity probably reflected the fact that his was the most fully developed *populist* intelligence in the country—which means that he was extremely valuable to Roosevelt. You could almost say that Roosevelt stole bits of method and tone from him. Winchell himself is a clue to public reality, to national life before it was clearly realized that we had such a life—and perhaps, outside media response, we didn't and still don't have much in the way of national life.

Winchell's opposition to Hitler was no small thing. Gabler writes, "Acting out of his sense of revenge and his fear of anti-Semitism, Walter took on Hitler in 1933." He wrote regularly about the activities of pro-Nazi groups and funnelled information to the F.B.I. Hoover was so grateful that he assigned agents to protect Winchell, beginning with a speaking tour in 1934. Hoover explained to one of his men that Winchell "has been very active in the anti-Nazi movement and feels there may be some efforts to cause him harm or embarrassment." The Mob also gave Winchell protection for a number of years. Of the successful popular figures in the Western countries, Winchell was the most consistently and blatantly and disrespectfully anti-Hitler. Hitler's influence was enormous. People are moved by success. People in the Midwest said "*Heil!*" half as a joke. Kids goose-stepped. The *idea,* whatever its quality as idea, was in popular motion, stirring the world. The extent to which Fascism and Nazism constituted a style—greatcoats, guns, and cars; hats and postures and faces and parades—and their overt S. & M. and violence held a deep, blind fascination. The aura of invincible ruthlessness and the threat of apocalypse were satisfyingly mocked—at the time—by Winchell's calling Hitler a fairy, for example. Such remarks were accusations of inauthenticity in Hitler's heroic persona. Where I lived, there was a sense that the rich—some of the very richest families—felt that Nazism rose from the people, from the *mob.* The rich took Nazism to be "the trash people" disciplining themselves. If these Nazi groups were vile, it was thought that their vileness was limited, and that a limited but well-ordered vileness suited the world, which was evil.

In a sense, between 1932 and 1936 the party of the twenties turned into a lawless political brawl. Winchell's column was then being published in the Washington *Herald* by Cissy Patterson, a photogenic rich woman with nerve, who bought the paper in 1939 and merged it with the Washington *Times.* She was very neurotic, a right-winger, an isolationist, and, apparently, pro-Nazi. Gabler tells us that in 1941, at a party for the British ambassador, Patterson confronted Winchell and demanded, "Why the hell don't you quit looking under the bed for Nazis?" Winchell retorted, "Mrs. Patterson, why don't you get another boy?"

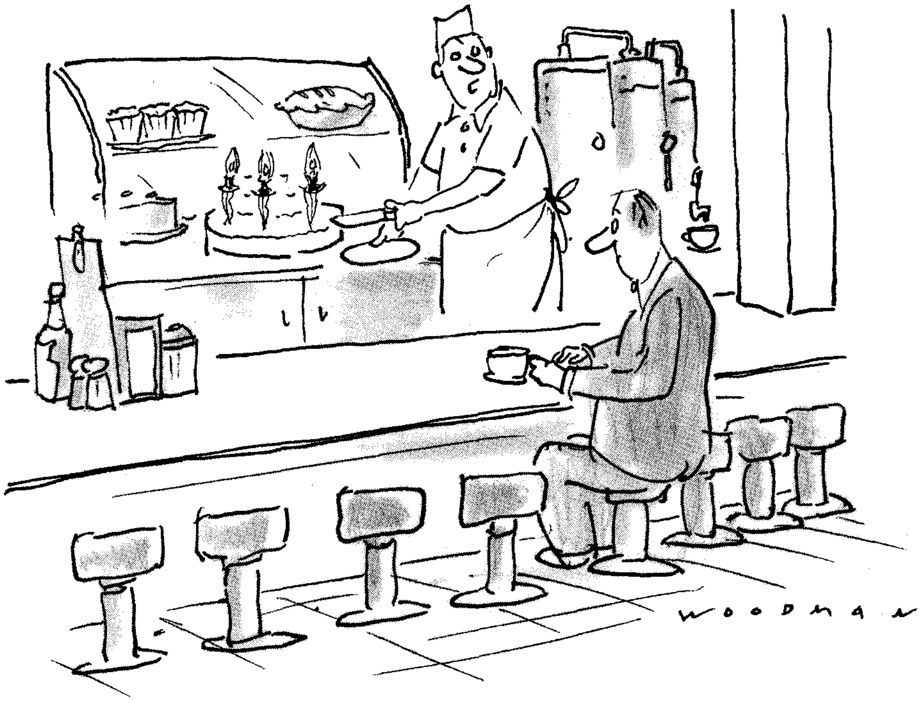
Gabler also says that Patterson described Winchell in print as suffering from "a chronic state of wild excitement, venom, and perpetual motion of the jaw" and as a "popgun patriot," a "grimy clown," and "one of those whispery, furtive characters who used to pop up from nowhere to ask if we'd care to buy some spicy French postcards." Gabler goes on, "One headline called him a 'Cockroach.' But these were less worrisome to him than Cissy's main line of attack. She began editing anti-isolationist and anti-Nazi items from his column, frequently killing the column entirely."

One of Patterson's other writers, Georgiana X. Preston, called Winchell a "twisted, inferiority-ridden soul, perpetually sick with hidden shame over his past and origins," and a "marred vessel that many of us had an unconscious hand in fashioning." Subheads were "How Winchell Is Like Hitler" and "He Has a Foxlike Face."

You can see how real the anti-Semitism was. Perhaps you can guess how exciting it was, in a provincial society, to have such violent and dangerous politics to be part of.

Gabler describes F.D.R. seducing Winchell in the course of a ten- or fifteen-minute meeting a week after his 1933 inauguration, by playing on Winchell's longings for stature: "However brief the meeting, it had its intended effect on the outcast from Harlem. . . . 'Winchell developed a blind adoration for FDR,' Walter's friend Ernest Cuneo later wrote." But I doubt that Winchell, bad man and exploiter of gossip and whatever else he was, was simply floored by a prep-school accent. Winchell and Roosevelt both had considerable judgment. It is very likely that an alliance was set afoot between them. Shortly after the meeting, Winchell began to do columns about the dispossessed and the starving, and the idea of Eleanor Roosevelt's daily column, which began appearing in 1936, may have been derived from the success of Winchell's column. She championed some of the same causes but in a very different—more elegant—verbal style. Gabler says that Winchell was resented for his role, that the "grievance against Winchell was the control he exercised over his social and intellectual superiors and what that control portended for the élites." This was actually truer for the Roosevelts, in their fairly well-documented war with their own caste. Winchell never claimed to be more than a columnist, a *newsboy*. Gabler defines Winchell's career in the nineteen-thirties in terms of religion:

> [Winchell] called himself an "intuitive" Jew, but his Judaism ran deep. . . . He suffered a vulnerability about being Jewish, a sense that "underneath, they're all anti-Semitic." To him, it was always the latent motive of his enemies: They had to destroy the powerful Jew.



"How do you want your slice—with or without a ballerina?"

• •

But Winchell was identified as a Jew chiefly in terms of being anti-Nazi; in this sense, Roosevelt himself was often accused of being a "Jew." Furthermore, it is not possible to be purely Jewish; one's mind wanders, one slips into being merely a person. Winchell was a *popular* Jew, and the Hitler question was not simply a Jewish matter. From where we stand now, we tend to see Nazism in terms of the Holocaust, but, of course, the Holocaust hadn't occurred yet. Hitler and Nazism were incompletely known, partly because they hadn't fully acted. The potential actions contained in them, the changed world they might bring about—all of that lay latent, as yet unclear. Hitler was the charismatic leader of an increasingly powerful state, and through the mid-thirties his opponents were still discreet and basically reasonable in their objections to him. Hitler's ideas and actions were feared and held in awe; his wildest remarks and political maneuverings were treated with what seems to us now a shocking amount of respect and restraint. His governmental programs and his willingness to wage war were the most pressing issues. Winchell grasped early on the extent to which Hitler was a menace, not just to Jews but to *everyone*, to life as we knew it. His attacks on Nazism did not diminish his enormous popularity—his popularity grew—and this indicated a "market" for anti-Nazism, indicated changing public feeling. No other person played such a role; no one propagandized against Hitler with such low-down ferocity. Just this one cheap journalist.

Historically, this trembling-nerved, loud, and heroic Winchell is invisible. But he was visible everywhere in this country at the time. He was, paradoxically, one of the people who mattered. He was the buzzmeister, the chief nerve of the American republic. Ernest Cuneo, the troubleshooter among the insidemost insiders at the White House, said he believed that Winchell "was carrying the fate of the Nation with him every time he went to the post," and added, "He was the only man who could simultaneously elevate FDR back into the White House and meet Goebbels . . . down in the gutter and stomp him and his lies into the mud."

Everyone knew Winchell was a hero.

Roosevelt and Winchell: two loners, widely hated and popular. Was it Roosevelt's inborn taste or an unavoidable tactic or the result of his relationship with Winchell in a country where the print media was dominated by Hearst, Luce, and the McCormicks—all of them suspicious of him as Commander-in-Chief and opposed to his tactics and his over-all strategy—that led Roosevelt to wage war by gradually convincing the populace that war was what it wanted?

People have said over and over that the Hitler war was the last just war; that is, they have credited the evil of Hitler with the comparatively moderate amount of disillusion with the war afterward. And it left us the political legacy that "greatness" is determined by the evil, the demonic quality, of the enemy. All that seems perverse. Roosevelt, in his conscienceless way as a leader, waged war with the consciousness (and wit) of an intelligent man. To some extent, Winchell's columns before 1943 can be used to indicate what Roosevelt was thinking—his process of selecting a program, a policy. The great stumbling block to any direct policy was American weakness. Folly and boasting aside, there were many people who believed that we could not beat the Germans. In the sentimental jargon of the prewar era, we were just people, not a people. Was it a pacifist society? It was, largely. Before Pearl Harbor, a culture had been evolving of extraordinary respect for individual lives, and this was broken—never really to return (so far)—by the war.

Skepticism and selfishness and survival were part of American culture in ways that militarism and discipline and self-sacrifice were not. Utopian virtue, moral pleas—even among the cynically disreputable—were powerful elements. Roosevelt threw all those conflicting attitudes out, bathwater and baby. We did have a class of armaments manufacturers and of military families, largely Southern, but we had such flagrantly lousy military equipment—by the spring of 1940, our few tanks were armed mostly with machine guns while many German tanks carried heavy-duty cannons—and such a lousy and out-of-date peacetime Army that Roosevelt reorganized everything. He was, in a sense, what he was so often accused of being—a playboy. And he was insanely overworked, insanely set on winning.

Roosevelt *seemed* to let the Army define itself and the ways it wanted to fight. This meant that there was almost unparalleled media coverage of the front lines—a tremendous flow of information. In response to this, and because much of Congress was isolationist before Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt established an unusual degree of secrecy—and, for the first time, found himself the center of favorable and pleading media attention. Winchell played a smaller and smaller part in the over-all picture. He became simply a home-front propagandist and a supplier of domestic infotainment—which is very odd, if you think about it. Well, there are two oddities: Winchell's staying away from battlefront reporting, and Roosevelt's undercutting Winchell's position and, in a broad sense, taking it for himself. Media reports about the war, the merits and/or the vanity and stupidity of the commanders, the quality of war matériel—this particular approach became the dominant thing, because it was what interested us most. What undermined Winchell's preëminence was that he did not do that stuff.

But why? Why allow yourself to be cut off from your own mass audience? From your own quality as a newspaperman? Or as a construct? A few years before, Gabler reports, in 1938, Winchell had announced that Roosevelt would run for a third term, and his language suggests that he and Roosevelt were in relatively close touch at the time. ("The President feels the nation needs him in the White House for another four-year term.") By late 1942, war news was more important than Winchell's news, although it was understood in Roosevelt's camp that in 1943 Winchell would begin preparing the public for Roosevelt's run for a fourth term. That was useful work but not important; it was scut work.

As I remember it, Winchell's slide from preëminence was perceptible as early as the landings in Northwest Africa, in November of 1942. He was, if you will forgive me, a purveyor of yesterday's Roosevelt. Gabler reports that Roosevelt and Hoover wanted Winchell to keep on fighting the isolationist elements in Congress and in the media. But Winchell knew that he could not compete with battlefront reporting. People talked. They said that Winchell was slipping or wasn't good anymore. Edward R. Murrow and Ernie Pyle and the photographers for *Life* were good.

In Hollywood's wartime movies, you can see this shift in our narrative unconscious. You can see the switch in story lines from lone-wolf figures like Bogart in "Casablanca" or "Passage to Marseilles" to platoons in military or Air Force stories, and you can see John Wayne and Errol Flynn (supposedly a Nazi sympathizer) do selfless dialogue that would have made Texas Guinan sick. In the movies, Van Johnson was the archetypal serviceman. Or Gene Kelly, with his face redesigned from movie to movie until he got it right. Hollywood wartime musicals still reflected Winchell's nineteen-twenties world—show business and Broadway and cynicism. But that was escapist stuff.

Perhaps Roosevelt's shenanigans—his political and military genius—broke Winchell's heart. Or, to put it another way, reality broke him. The automatism that set in—the robotization of his responses—was so extensive that it is possible to say he was a dead man from then on. Popular, yes. But weird. And not important. He was out of it, and he never was in it again. The heroism, the bigtimeness vanished from the legend. And the having a good time and the gossip remained. The short guy who went with tall showgirls remained.

Actually, Roosevelt's undeviating will to success was not so different from Winchell's. (Or Eisenhower's.) He waged a deft war, waged it expensively, but did not bankrupt the country in terms of either blood or money. And he didn't change his style much—this wasn't something that was stage-managed. It wasn't *image*. It was the extraordinary, bloody success he met with.

Of the major Allied wartime leaders, Roosevelt was the only one who died before the war ended. It is surprising how few leaders die in wartime. Tension and blood seem to keep them going. I am just guessing, but I think Winchell's collapse or withdrawal into pettiness and Eisenhower's stony manner after the war are related. They both had to do with the killer instinct and its exercise, with the fear of success and then the reality of success in war. The knowledge of the godawful way people act (their greed, their vicarious or direct violence), and of the youth and helplessness of those who died, leads to shame—shame and what is now called denial, a sort of macho, still functioning, white-male autism. Everyone sort of went mad.

It's just a theory. But you can't imagine how strange it seemed, at the time, that Roosevelt died before the end of the war. Of course, he knew about the camps. And, yes, he was ill, and he was a cripple. But he was Franklin Roosevelt, and he had conquered the world and had more sheer power than any other creature in history. Was it unbearable? Was he ashamed? Just as a human thing—do you know what I mean?

Each of the spectacularly lit and photographed wartime leaders-as-symbols—

Chiang Kai-shek and Franco and Stalin and Churchill and Hitler and F.D.R.—had a huge, androgynous vanity. Is there an answer to what has happened to us in these male pinups of the achievement of great power? Imagine being the cause of literally innumerable deaths—say, fifty million, all told, in that war, or even more, if you begin the calculation earlier in the nineteen-thirties. Something of each man was visible in those posed photographs: in one case, something of the mutt aristocrat; in another, the immovable father; and then there was the alternately stern or laughing deviant, the Oriental general, the self-invented and crippled American.

For me, by the time of Yalta Roosevelt was half mad in his photographs. In the Yalta group photograph, his expression has a self-mocking quality and a touch of horror. He is wearing a cape and has a cigarette in his left hand. Churchill sits on one side of him, Stalin on the other. They look like pets on chains. Roosevelt's role in world history, in the defeat of Hitler, had a blood-chilling quality, and an absolutely top-flight cleverness. He looks like the cat who swallowed the canary. He looks as if he were in an advanced state of shock and disbelief: the atomic bomb he'd ordered into existence was simmering on the stove.

This didn't keep him alive. This didn't keep him going. But let's say that Roosevelt's brilliance broke Winchell. What the story amounts to, really, is that Winchell fell out of love with fame and with history in a peculiarly American manner. The rest of his life consists of his hanging on, without much in the way of fire or desperation visible, and of a long, slow retrenchment until he wound up, in Gabler's words, a "ranting King Lear," haunting the Stork Club—a man who, in his own mind, had backed off from Roosevelt and politics and war, and remembered with the most intensity an episode involving gangsters—the slaying of a single man, Vincent (Mad Dog) Coll, or some such thing.

After 1943, when the stench of glory arose, a datedness hung over the politics of the thirties. And America was so unbelievably rich that all history was mocked. All the money in the world wound up here. But it was truly odd how when the war changed—when it turned into our crushing everyone—Roosevelt sort of evaporated. He went off and died almost a thousand miles from Washington. He had been with an old girlfriend; his wife and children were nowhere near him. It was not the usual stuff of legend.

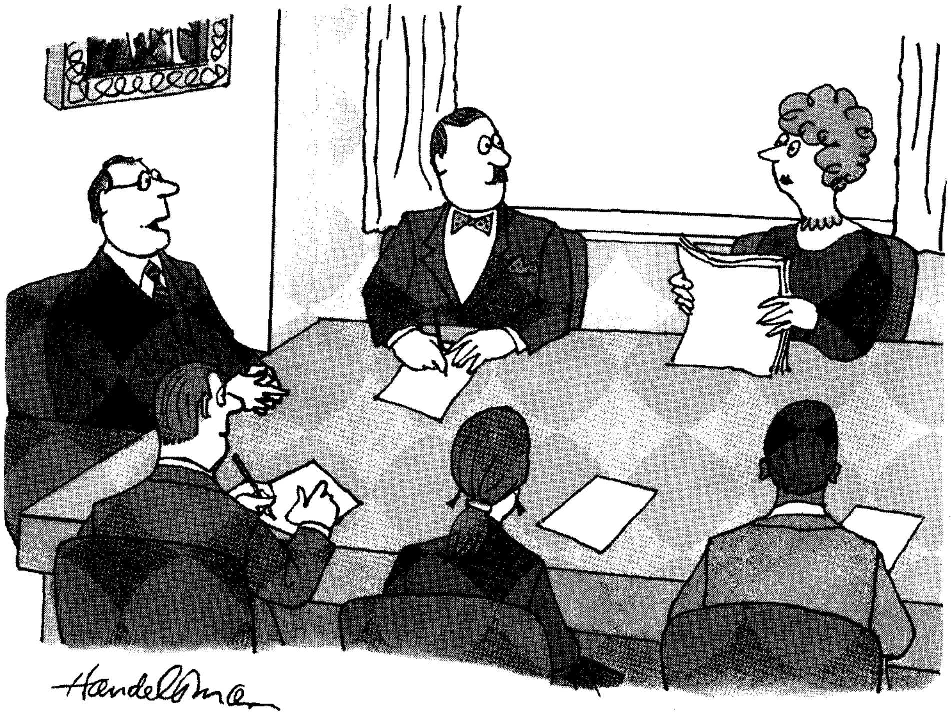
It was funny how when Roosevelt was gone you realized that no one else in public life was interesting. Winchell certainly wasn't. Perhaps, in the end, Winchell was a grieving-widow type, like Mamie Eisenhower, who lost her small-town husband to the war and then to his "greatness," and who by some accounts became an alcoholic. I have almost no postwar memories of Winchell except as someone cracked, as a fool.

I did read his column from time to time, but it had no life. And not much influence. Sometimes he had good inside information, but not often. He seemed to admire Eisenhower, who was said to have a gift for being placatory matched by an obscene toughness. Perhaps Winchell grew to be like Eisenhower in that way. In a sense, neither Roosevelt nor Winchell made it through the war, the crippled Prospero and his rat-a-tat-tat Caliban.

THEN it was the fifties. We Americans, ex-rubes, ex-bumpkins, ex-hicks, walked very carefully in our ad-hoc new America, the one powerful, rich country in the world, a quasi-socialist utopian state with good public education, good hospitals, nearly full employment for white males, a country with quotas for Jews in most occupations and with lower-level jobs for blacks. There was a sense of community, which had come to us from Roosevelt and the war.

Of course, utopia is a crock of shit. But it was hard to deny its *douceur,* which was not that of the upper classes but that of pushy, not especially educated men. Truman and Eisenhower were both regular guys, wonderfully uninspired—again, walking dead men. Except in terms of pop culture, this happy state of prosperity was a cultural defeat of the deepest imaginable kind, since nothing from the past could carry over into it—not Spartan simplicity or high ethics or upstate-downstate politics.

We tried to go back in time. Women were sent back into the kitchen—and into waist-cinchers. The country made suburban noises. But the Roosevelt legacy was so complex and generated so much power and aroused so much ego that moral cowardice and personal safety and corruption and self-doubt and unlimited greed became national characteristics and national virtues. No one knew how to act. It felt as if this were a country consisting entirely of recent converts, and everyone went on tiptoe. McCarthyism came—first it was an attack on the



"That was a fine report, Barbara. But since the sexes speak different languages, I probably didn't understand a word of it."

upper-caste white Protestants that Roosevelt distrusted, and then on show-business figures, and then it became a move toward a popular coup. Winchell allied himself with McCarthy and publicly attacked Truman and Stevenson, calling them "un-American."

It was not an era of clear thought. Eisenhower tacitly backed McCarthy and then withdrew from him and then destroyed him. The veterans' right to have a McCarthy—to protect the Roosevelt legacy long enough for them to get rich from it, too—seemed very clear, but that didn't make any of it bearable. It seemed to be a function of a semi-utopian mass society that it be unlivable.

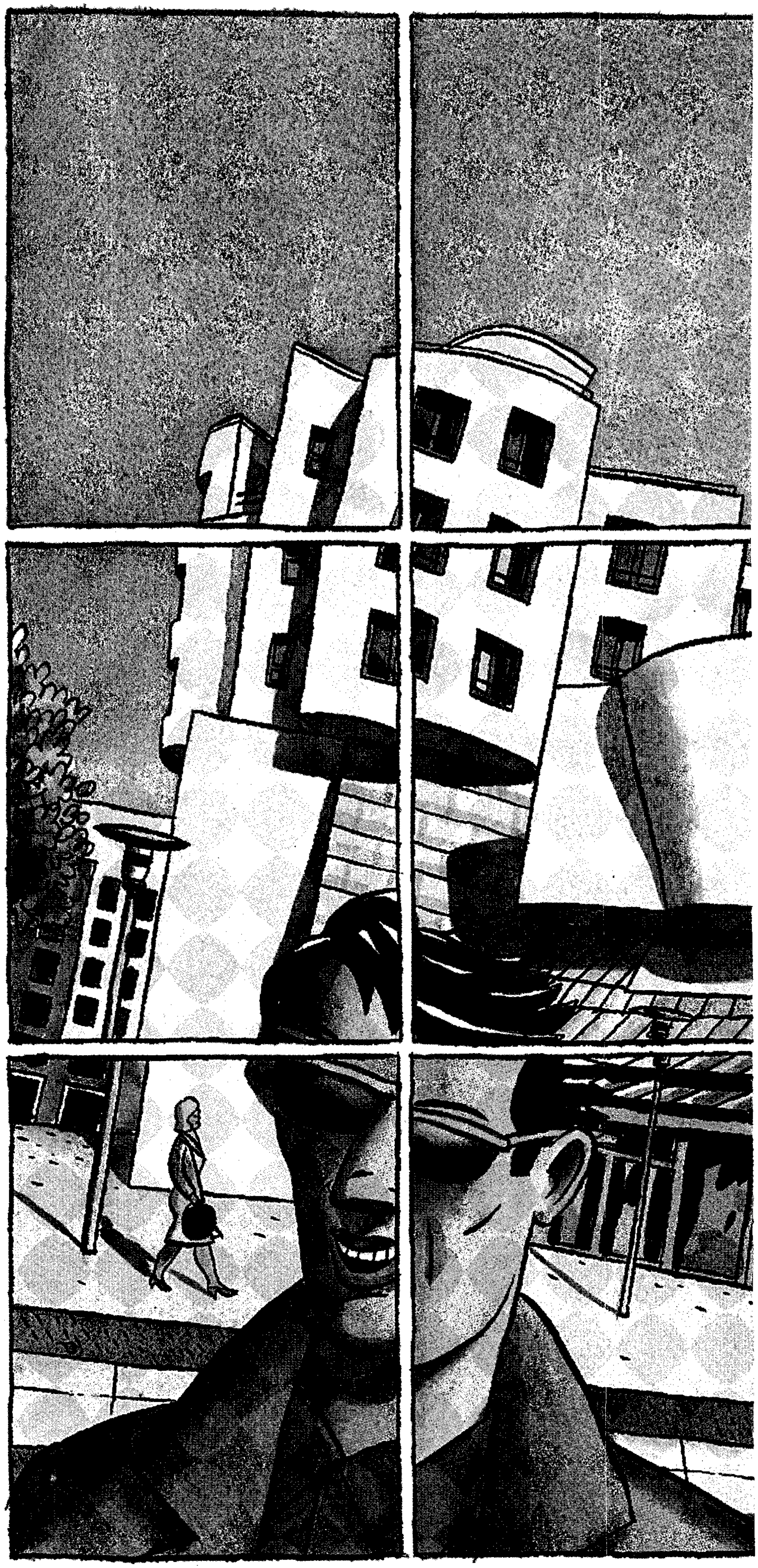
In that society, Winchell was a memory figure. The Luce magazines had imitated Winchell's tactics and improved on them—a process that culminated later in the creation of *People*. You could even say that the *Times* gradually became, in its lengthy way, a version daily and on Sundays of a Winchell column. Improving on Winchell and sneering at him, attacking him in a twenty-four-part profile in the *Post* was like smoking your father's brand of cigars. But it wasn't much said that Winchell was imitated—it was journalism. It was God speaking through inspired editors.

What happened to the notion of celebrity was paradoxical: there was a demystification, based on the mystique of success, but a success that anyone could have. This new social reality did not concern the most interesting lives but lives that anyone could live (depending on how well you were groomed and how good your publicist was). In our rich democracy, anyone—Nixon, Kennedy, Carter—could be another Roosevelt, and anyone could be a Winchell and was. You didn't need the authentic one.

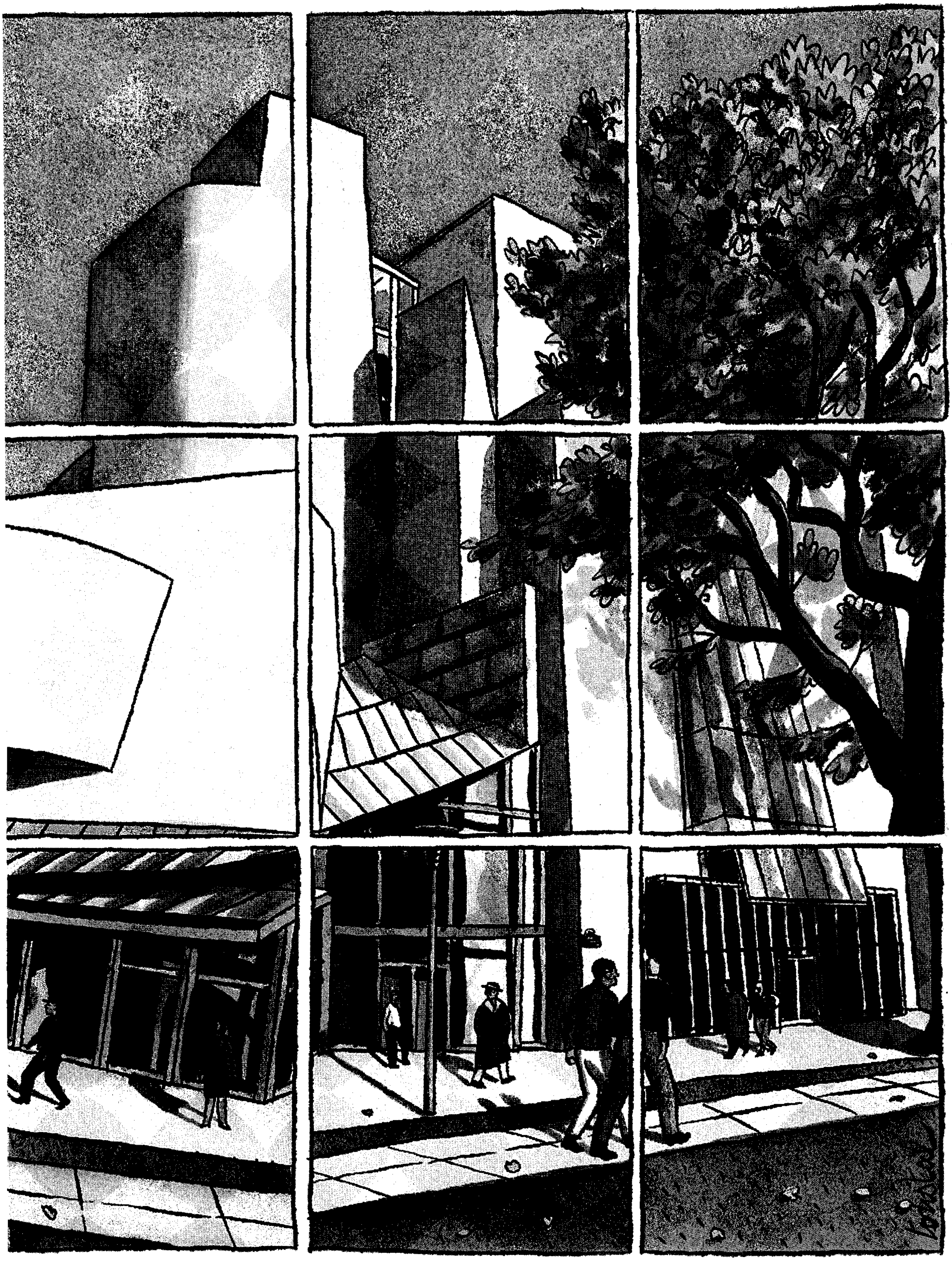
Winchell didn't like to appear on television. The visual has an obstinate obscurity, a riddle quality, an ambiguity that went against his grain. Winchell's legacy was everywhere, but was unnamed. Gabler writes of him, "All that would remain was this image of an angry, mean, foolish old man railing at the fates that had betrayed him."

Winchell had a Job aspect and a Noah aspect and a bit of Lot's wife in him, too. He railed at fate, he fought it, and he won for a while—and, of course, he lost in the end. And it broke him.

It is practically everyone's story. ♦



THE AMERICAN CENTER IN PARIS: *Frank Gehry's building, an alluring neig*



e controversial National Library, the last of Mitterrand's "grands projets," is drawing big crowds. Is this the new Pompidou Plaza?

FICTION

AN INTERVAL

BY DAVID FOSTER WALLACE

BOTH House Director Pat Montesian and Don Gately's A.A. sponsor like to remind him how the new Ennet House resident Geoffrey Day could be an invaluable teacher for him, Gately, as Staff.

"So then at forty-six years of age I came here to learn to live by clichés" is what Day says to Charlotte Treat right after Randy Lenz asked what time it was at 0825. "To turn my will and life over to the care of clichés. One day at a time. Easy does it. First things first. Ask for help. Thy will not mine be done. It works if you work it. Grow or go. Keep coming back."

Poor old Charlotte Treat, needlepointing primly beside him on the old vinyl couch that just came from Goodwill, purses her lips. "You need to ask for some gratitude."

"Oh no but the point is that I've already been fortunate enough to *receive* gratitude." Day crosses one leg over the other in a way that inclines his whole little soft body toward her. "For which, believe you me, I'm grateful. I cultivate gratitude. That's part of the system of clichés I'm here to live by. An attitude of gratitude. A grateful drunk will never drink. I know the actual cliché is 'A grateful heart will never drink,' but since organs can't properly be said to imbibe and I'm still afflicted with just enough self-will to decline to live by utter non sequiturs, as opposed to just good old clichés, I'm taking the doubtless hazardous liberty of light amendment. Albeit grateful amendment, of course."

Charlotte Treat looks over to Gately for some sort of help or Staff enforcement of dogma. The poor bitch is clueless. All of them are clueless, still. Gately reminds himself that he too is probably still mostly clueless, even after all these hundreds of days. "I Didn't Know That I Didn't Know" is another of these slogans that look so shallow for a while and then all of a sudden drop off and deepen like the lobster waters off the North Shore. As Gately fidgets his way through daily A.M. meditation he always tries to remind himself daily that this is all an Ennet House residency is supposed to do: buy these poor yutzes some time, some thin pie slice of abstinent time, till they can start to get a whiff of what's true and deep, almost magic, under the shallow surface of what they're trying to do.

"I cultivate it assiduously. I do special gratitude exercises at night up there in the room. *Gratitude-ups*, you could call them. Ask Randy over there if I don't do them like clockwork. Diligently. Sedulously."

"Well it's true is all," Treat sniffs. "About gratitude."

Everybody else except Gately, who is lying on the old other couch opposite them, is ignoring this exchange, watching an old movie whose tracking is a little messed up so that staticky stripes eat at the picture's bottom and top. The Ennet House Director, Pat M., encourages new Staff to think of residents they'd like to bludgeon to death as teachers of patience, tolerance, self-discipline, and restraint. She can always tell when Gately's exercising tolerant restraint, because of the slight facial tic that betrays his effort of will, and makes it a point to praise his willingness to grow and change when the cheek starts to spasm.

Day isn't done. "One of these exercises is being grateful that life is so much *easier* now. I used sometimes to think. I used to think in long compound sentences with subordinate clauses and even the odd polysyllable. Now I find I needn't. Now I live by the dictates of macramé samplers ordered from the back-page ad of an old *Reader's Digest* or *Saturday Evening Post*. Easy Does It. Remember to Remember. But for the Grace of God. Turn It Over. Terse, hard-boiled. Good old Norman Rockwell–Paul Harvey wisdom. I walk around with my arms out straight in front of me and recite these clichés. In a monotone. No inflection necessary. Could that be one? Could that be added to the cliché pool? No inflection necessary? Too many syllables, probably."

Poor old Charlotte Treat, all of nine weeks clean, is looking primmer and primmer. She glances again over at Gately, lying on his back, taking up the living room's whole other sofa, one sneaker up on the sofa's square worn-fabric arm, his eyes almost closed. Only House Staff get to lie on the couches.

"Denial," Charlotte finally says, "is not a river in Egypt."

"Hows about the both of you shut the fuck up," says Emil Minty.

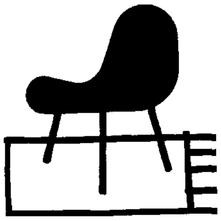
Geoffrey (not Geoff, Geoffrey) Day has been at Ennet House eight days. He came in from Roxbury's infamous Dimock Detox, where he was the only white person, which Gately bets must have been broadening for him. Day has a squished blank smeared flat face, one requiring great effort to like, and eyes that are just starting to lose the nictitated glaze of early sobriety. Gately tries to remind himself that Day is a newcomer and still very raw. A red-wine-and-Quaalude man who finally nodded out in late October and put his Saab through the window of a Malden sporting-goods store and then got out and proceeded to browse until Boston's finest came and got him. He'd taught something horseshit-sounding like social historicity or historical sociality at some Jr. college up the Expressway in Medford and came in saying in his Intake interview that he also manned the helm of a scholarly quarterly. Word for word, the House Manager had said: "manned the helm" and "scholarly quarterly." His Intake indicated that Day'd been in and out of a blackout for most of the last several years, and his wiring is still as they say pretty frayed. His detox at Dimock, where they barely have the resources to slip you a Librium if you start to D.T., must have been real grim, because Geoffrey D. now alleges it never happened: his story is he just strolled into Ennet House on a lark one day from his home five-plus miles away in Malden and found the place too hilariously egregious to want to leave.

It's the newcomers with some education that are the worst, according to Staffer Eugenio M. They identify their whole selves with their head, and the Disease makes its command headquarters in the head. Day wears chinos of indeterminate hue, brown socks with black shoes, and shirts that the House Manager had described on the Intake form as "East-European-type turtleneck shirts." Day's now on the vinyl couch with Charlotte Treat after breakfast in the Ennet House living room with a few of the other residents who either aren't working or don't have to be at work early, and with Gately, who'd pulled a night shift down in the front office till 0400, then got temp-relieved by Johnette Foltz so he could go to work down at the Shattuck Shelter till 0700, and then came and hauled ass back up and took back over so Johnette F. could go off to her N.A.-convention thing with a bunch of N.A. kids in what looked like a VW bus without a hood over the engine, and is now, Gately, covering Johnette's half of the day shift until somebody else gets here, and is trying to unclench and center himself inside by tracing the cracks in the paint of the living room ceiling with his eyes. Gately often feels a terrible sense of loss, narcotics-wise, in the A.M., still, even after all this drug-free time. His A.A. sponsor over at the White Flag group says some people never get over the loss of what they'd thought was their one true best friend and lover; they just have to pray daily for acceptance and patience and the brass danglers to move forward through the grief and loss, to wait for time to harden the scab. The sponsor doesn't give Gately one bit of shit for feeling bad: on the contrary, he commends Gately for his candor in breaking down and crying like a baby and finally telling him about it one A.M., the sense of terrible loss. It's a myth no one misses it. Their particular Substance. Shit, you wouldn't need to give it up if you didn't miss it. You just have to Turn It Over, the emptiness and loss, Keep Coming, show up, pray, Ask for Help. Gately rubs his eye. Simple advice like this does seem like a lot of clichés—Day's right about how it seems. Yes, and if Geoffrey Day keeps on steering by the way things seem to him, he's a dead man sure. Gately's already watched dozens come through here and leave early and some of them die. If Day ever gets lucky and breaks down, finally, and comes to the office late at night to clutch at his pant cuff and blubber and beg for help, Gately'll get to tell Day that the clichéd directives of recovery are a lot more deep and hard to actually do. To try and live by instead of just say. But he'll only get to say it if Day comes and asks. Personally, Gately gives Day like a month at the outside before he's back tipping his hat to parking meters. Except who is Gately to judge who'll end up getting the Gift of the program v. who won't, he needs to remember. He tries to feel like Day is teaching him patience. It takes great patience and tolerance not to want to punt the guy out into Commonwealth Ave. and open up his bunk to somebody that really wants it, desperately, the Gift. Except who is Gately to think he can know who wants it and who doesn't, deep down. Gately's arm is behind his head, up against the sofa's other arm. The VCR is on to something violent Gately neither sees nor hears. He can sort of turn his attention on and off like a light. Even when he was a resident here, he'd had this pro housebreaker's ability to screen input, to do sensory triage. It was one reason he'd been able to stick out his nine residential months with twenty-one other newly detoxed housebreakers, hoods, whores, fired execs, subway musicians, beer-bloated construction workers, vagrants, cirrhotic car salesmen, bunko artists, mincing pillow biters, North End hard guys, Avon ladies, pimply kids with nose-rings, denial-ridden housewives and etc., all jonesing and head-gaming and desperate and grieving and basically whacked-out and producing non-stopping output 24/7.

At some point in here Day says, "So bring on the lobotomist, bring him on I say!"

Except that Gately's counsellor when he was a resident here, Eugenio Martinez, one of the volunteer alumni counsellors, a one-eared former boiler-room bunko man and now a cellular-phone retailer who'd gone through the House under the original pre-Pat founder and now had about like ten years clean, Eugenio M. had lovingly confronted Gately early on about his special burglar's selective attention and about how it could be dangerous, because how can you be sure it's you doing the input screening and not the Spider. Eugenio had called addiction the Spider instead of the Disease, and dispensed his advice in terms of like for example "Feeding the Spider" v. "Starving the Spider" and so on. He'd called Gately into the House Manager's back office and said what if screening his attention's input turned out to be Feeding the Spider and what about an experimental unscreening of input for a while. And Gately had said he'd do his best to try and had come back out and tried to watch a Celtics game while two resident pillow biters from off the Fenway were on the couch having this involved conversation about some third fag having to go in and get the skeleton of some kind of fucking rodent removed from inside his butthole. The unscreening experiment had lasted half an hour. This was right before Gately got his ninety-day chip and wasn't exactly wrapped real tight, still. Ennet House this year is nothing like the freak show it was when Gately went through. Gately has been Substance-free for four hundred and twenty-one days today.

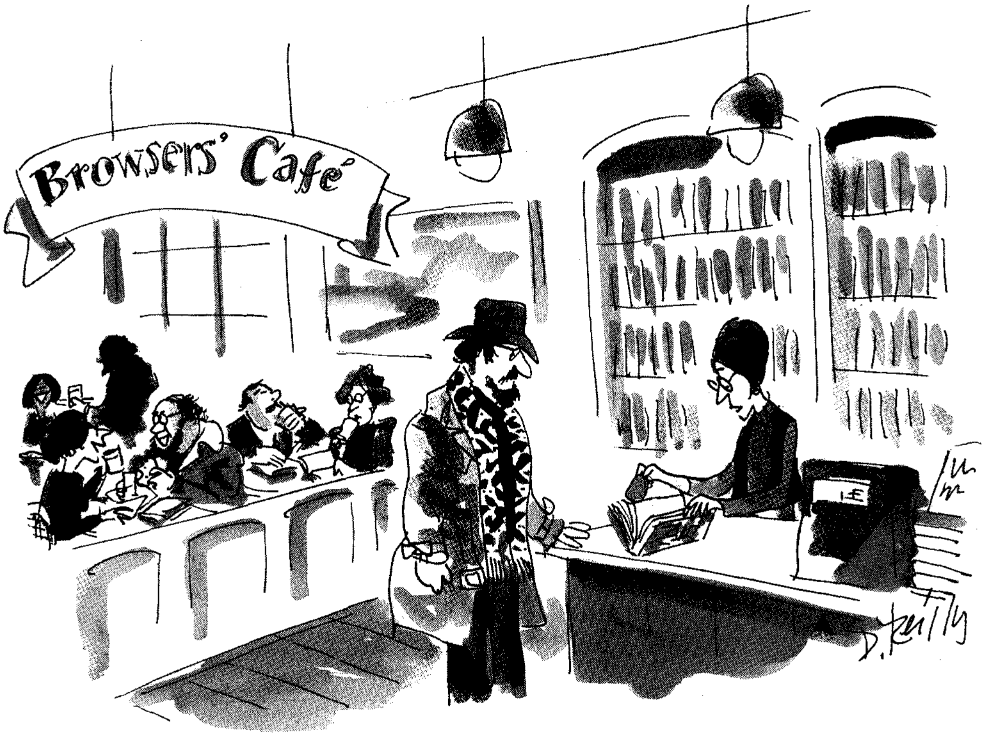
Charlotte Treat, with her carefully made-up, ruined face, is watching the static-striped movie on the VCR while she needlepoints something. Conversation between her and Geoffrey D. has mercifully petered out. Day is scanning the room for somebody else to engage and piss off so he can prove to himself he doesn't fit in here and stay separated off isolated inside himself and maybe get them so pissed off there's a beef and he gets bounced out, Day, and it won't be his fault. You can almost hear the Spider of his Disease chewing away inside his head. Emil Minty, Randy Lenz, and Bruce Green are also in the room, sprawled in spring-shot chairs, lighting one gasper off the end of the last, their posture the don't-fuck-with-me slouch of the streets that here makes their bodies' texture somehow hard to distinguish from that of the chairs. Nell Gunther is sitting at the long table in the doorless dining room that opens out right off the old donated VCR and monitor's pine stand, whitening under her nails with a manicure pencil amid the remains of something she's eaten that involved serious syrup. Joe S. is also in there, way down by himself at the table's far end, trying to saw at a waffle with a knife and fork attached to the stumps of his wrists with Velcro bands. A long-ago former C.P.A., Joe Smith is forty-five and looks seventy, has almost all-white hair that's waxy and yellow from close-order smoke, and finally got into Ennet House last month after a summer in the Cambridge City Shelter. Joe S. is making his fiftieth-odd stab at some kind of durable sobriety in A.A. Once devoutly R.C., he's had crippling trouble with Faith in a Loving God ever since the R.C. Church apparently granted his wife an annulment in '91 after fifteen years of marriage. Then for several years a rooming-house drunk, which in Gately's view is like one step up from a homeless-person-type drunk. Joe S. got jumped and rolled and beaten half to death in Cambridge in the storm on Xmas Eve of last year and left to freeze in an alley, and ended up losing his hands and feet. Whenever residents Doony Glynn and Wade McDade are together in a room and Joe S. comes teetering in on his blocky prosthetic shoes, G. and McD. will stand up and shout together: "Hail Joe, Asleep in the Snow!" Repeated threats of Restriction and worse have not broken them of this practice. Doony Glynn's also been observed telling Joe Smith things like that there's some new guy coming in and moving into the Disabled Room with Joe who's totally minus arms or legs or even a head and communicates by farting in Morse code. Which sally earned Glynn three days' Full House Restriction and a week's extra House Chore for what Johnette Foltz described in the Staff Log as "XSive Crulty." There is a vague intestinal moaning in Gately's right side. Watching Joe Smith smoke a Benson & Hedges by holding it between his stumps with his elbows out like a man with pruning shears is an adventure in fucking pathos, as far as Gately's concerned. And forget about what it's like trying to watch Joe S. try to light a match.



Gately, who's been on Live-In Staff here four months now, believes Charlotte Treat's devotion to needlepoint is suspect. All those needles. In and out of all that thin sterile-white cotton stretched drum-tight in its round frame. The needle makes a kind of thud and squeak when it goes in the cloth. It's not much like the soundless pop and slide of a real cook-and-shoot. But still. She takes such great care.

Gately wonders what color he'd call the ceiling if forced to call it a color. It's not beige and it's not gray. The brown-yellow tones are from high-tar gaspers; a pall hangs up near the ceiling even this early in the new sober day. Some of the drunks and trank-jockeys stay up most of the night, joggling their feet and chain-smoking, even though there's no movies or music allowed after midnight. Don G. has that odd House Staffer's knack, already, after four months, of seeing everything significant in both living and dining rooms without really looking. Emil Minty, a hard-core smack-addict punk here for reasons nobody can quite yet pin down, is in an old mustard-colored easy chair with his combat boots up on one of the standing ashtrays, which is tilting not quite enough for Gately to tell him to watch out, please. Minty's orange Mohawk and the shaved skull around it are starting to grow out brown, which is just not a pleasant sight in the morning at all. The other ashtray on the floor by his chair is full of the ragged new moons of bitten nails, which has got to mean that Esther Thrale, who Gately ordered to bed at 0230, was back down here in the chair having at her nails again the second Gately left to go mop up shit at the Shattuck Shelter. Another gurgle and abdominal chug. When he's up all night Gately's stomach gets all acidy and tight, from either the coffee, maybe, or just the staying up. Emil M.'s been sleeping in the streets since he was maybe sixteen, Gately can tell: he's got that sooty complexion homeless guys have where the soot has insinuated itself into the dermal layer. And the big-armed driver for Leisure Time Ice, the quiet kid, Bruce Green, a garbage-head all-Substance-type kid, maybe twenty-one, face very slightly smunched in on one side, wears sleeveless khaki shirts, used to live in a trailer in that apocalyptic Enfield trailer park out near Allston; Gately likes Green because he seems to have sense enough to keep his yap shut when he's got nothing important to say, which is basically all the time. The tattoo on the kid's right tricep is a spear-pierced heart over the hideous name *MILDRED BONK*, who Bruce G. told him was a ray of living light and a dead ringer for the late lead singer of The Fiends in Human Shape and his dead heart's one love ever, and who took their daughter and left him this summer for some guy who'd told her he ranched fucking longhorn cows east of Atlantic City, N.J. He's got, even by Ennet House standards, major-league sleep trouble, Green, and he and Gately play cribbage sometimes in the wee dead hours, a game Gately picked up in jail. Joe S. is now hunched in a meaty coughing fit, his elbows out and forehead purple. Gately can see everything without moving his eyes at all.

And then Lenz. Randy Lenz is a small-time organic-coke dealer who wears sport coats rolled up over his big forearms and is always checking his pulse on the inside of his wrists. It's come out that Lenz is of keen interest to both sides of the law; this past May he'd apparently all of a sudden lost all control and holed up in a Charlestown motel and freebased most of a whole hundred grams he'd been fronted by a suspiciously trusting Brazilian in what Lenz didn't know was supposed to have been a D.E.A. sting operation in the South End. Having screwed both sides in what Gately secretly views as a delicious fuckup, Randy Lenz has, since May, been the most wanted he's probably ever been. He is seedily handsome in the way of pimps and low-level coke dealers, muscular in the way certain guys' muscles look muscular but can't really lift anything, with complexly gelled hair and the little birdlike head movements of the deeply vain. One forearm's hair has a little hairless patch, which Gately knows all too well spells knife owner, and if there's one thing Gately's never been able to stomach it's a knife owner, little swaggery guys who always queer a square beef and come up off the ground with a blade so you have to get cut to take it away from them. Lenz is teaching Gately a restrained compassion for people you pretty much want to beat up on sight. And it's obvious to everybody except Pat Montesian—whose odd gullibility in the presence of human sludge, though, Gately needs to try to remember, was one of the reasons why he himself had got into Ennet House—that Lenz is here mostly just to hide. He rarely leaves the House except under compulsion, avoids all windows, and travels nightly to the required A.A./N.A. meetings in a disguise that makes him look like Cesar Romero after a terrible accident; and then he always wants to walk home solo afterward, which is not encouraged. Lenz's leg never stops joggling; Day claims it joggles even worse in sleep. Lenz is seated low in the northeasternmost corner of an old fake-velour love seat that he's jammed in the



"Let me get you another copy. Someone left a slice of salami in this one."

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northeasternmost corner of the living room. Randy Lenz has a strange compulsive need to be north of everything, and possibly even northeast of everything, and Gately has no clue what it's about but observes Lenz's position routinely for his own interest and files.

Second-month resident Charlotte Treat has violently red hair. As in hair the color of like a red crayon. She doesn't have to work the usual outside menial job, because she has some strain of the Virus or maybe A.R.C. Former prostitute, reformed. Why do prostitutes when they get straight always try and get so prim? It's like long-repressed librarian ambitions come flooding out. Charlotte T. has a cut-rate whore's hard, half-pretty face, her eyes lassoed with shadow around all four lids. Her also with a case of the dermal-layer sooty complexion. The thing about Treat is how her cheeks are deeply pitted in deep trenches that she packs with foundation and tries to cover over with blush, which along with the hair gives her the look of a mean clown. The ghastly wounds in her cheeks look for all the world like somebody got at her with a woodburning kit at some point in her career path. Gately would rather not know.

DON GATELY is almost twenty-nine and sober and just huge. One shoulder blade and buttock pooch out over the side of a sofa that sags like a hammock. Lying there gurgling and inert with eyes half shut and a tolerant if ticcy smile. Gately looks less built than poured, with the smooth immovability of an Easter Island statue. It would be nice if intimidating size weren't one of the factors in a male graduate's getting offered the male Live-In Staff job here, but there you are. He has a massive square head made squarer-looking by the Prince Valiant-ish haircut he tries to maintain himself in the mirror, to save money. Room and board aside—plus of course the opportunity for Service—he makes very little money as an Ennet House Staffer, and is paying off restitution schedules in three different district courts. He has the fluttery white-eyed smile now of someone who's holding himself just over the level of doze. Pat Montesian isn't due in until 0900, and he can't go to sleep until she shows, because the House Manager has driven Jennifer Belbin to a court appearance downtown and Gately's the only Staffer here; Foltz, the other Live-In, is at a Narcotics Anonymous convention in Hartford for the long weekend. Gately personally is not hot on N.A.: so many relapses and unhumble returns, so many drug stories told with undisguised bullshit pride, so little emphasis on Service or serious Message; all those people in leather and metal, preening. Rooms full of Randy Lenzes, all hugging each other, pretending they don't miss narcotics. Rampant vulnerable-newcomer fucking. There's a difference between abstinence and recovery, Gately knows. Though who is Gately to judge what works for who. He just knows what seems like it works for him, today. A.A.'s tough Boston love, the White Flag group, old guys with suspendered bellies and white crewcuts and geologic amounts of sober time who'll take your big square head off if they sense you're getting complacent or chasing tail or forgetting that your life still hangs in the balance every fucking day. White Flag newcomers so crazed and sick they can't sit, and have to pace at the meeting's rear, like Gately when he first came. Retired old kindergarten teachers in polyresin slacks and a pince-nez who bake cookies for the weekly meeting and relate from behind the podium how they used to blow bartenders at closing for just two more fingers in a paper cup to take home against the morning's needled light. Gately, albeit an oral-narcotics man from way back, has committed himself to A.A. He drank his fair share, too, he figures, after all.

House Director Pat M. is due in at 0900 and has application interviews with three people, 2 F and 1 M, who better be showing up soon; and Gately will get up and answer the door when they don't know enough to just come in and will say Welcome and get them a cup of coffee if he judges them able to hold it. He'll take them aside and tip them off to be sure to pet Pat M.'s dogs during the interview. The dogs'll be sprawled all over the front office, sides heaving, writhing and biting at themselves. He'll tell the applicants it's a proved fact that if Pat's dogs like you, you're in. Pat M. has directed Gately to tell applicants this, and then if they do actually pet the dogs—two hideous white golden retrievers with suppurating skin afflictions, plus one has grand-mal epilepsy—it'll betray a level of desperate willingness that Pat says is just about all she goes by, deciding.

A nameless cat oozes by on the broad windowsill above the back of the fabric couch. Animals here come and go. Graduates adopt them or they just disappear. Their fleas tend to remain. Gately's intestines gurgle. Boston's dawn this morning was chemically pink. The nail parings in the ashtray on the floor are, he sees, way too big to be fingernail bits. These bitten arcs are broad and thick and a deep autumnal yellow. They are not from fingers. He swallows hard.

Gately'd tell Day how even if they are just clichés, clichés are: (a) soothing, and (b) proclaim a common sort of common sense, and (c) license the universal assent that drowns out silence. And fourth, silence is deadly, pure Spider-food, if you've got the Disease. The older White Flaggers say you can spell the Disease "dis-ease," which sums the basic situation up nicely. Gately should probably also tell him that the only real ultimate relief from the Disease is God, as in finding and cultivating some kind of personally comfortable and worshipable Higher Power; but Gately still can't bring himself to say this kind of thing out loud. Pat has a meeting at the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services in Government Center at noon she needs to be reminded about, since she can't read her own handwriting. Gately envisions going around having to find out who's biting their fucking toenails in the living room and putting the disgusting toenail bits in the ashtray at like 0500. House Regs prohibit bare feet anyplace downstairs.

There's a pale-brown water stain on the ceiling over Day and Treat the exact shape of Florida. Randy Lenz has issues with Geoffrey Day because Day is educated and a teacher and mans a journal's helm. This threatens the self-concept of Lenz, who sees himself as a kind of hiply sexy artist-dash-intellectual. Small-time dealers never think of themselves as just small-time dealers. For Occupation on his Intake form Lenz had put "free lance writer." And he makes a big show of the fact he reads. For his first sober week here in August he'd sat all day smoking and joggling in the northeast corner of the living room, holding open a gigantic medical dictionary and pretending to be reading medical words until Glynn and McDade started busting his balls about never turning the page. At which juncture he quit reading and started talking, making everybody nostalgic for when he just read. Johnette F. had put in the September Log that Lenz would, quote, "get on your very last nerve," which Gately had underlined in a different-color ink. Plus Geoffrey D. has issues with Randy L., too. The dislike is mutual. There's a certain way they don't look at each other. And so now of course they're mashed in together in the tiny three-man bedroom, since last week three guys in one night missed curfew and came in without one normal-sized pupil between them and all refused Urines and got discharged on the spot, and so Day got moved up in his first week from the five-man newcomers' room to the three-man. Seniority comes quick around here. Lenz and Day: a beef may be brewing. Day'll try to goad Lenz into a beef that'll be public enough so he doesn't get hurt but does get bounced out, and then he can leave treatment and go back to Chianti and ludes and make out like the relapse is Ennet House's and never have to confront himself or his Disease. To Gately, Geoffrey D. is like a wide-open textbook on the Disease. One of Gately's jobs is to keep an eye on what's possibly brewing among residents and let Pat or the House Manager know and to try to smooth things down in advance if possible.

The ceiling's color could be called dun, if forced. Someone has farted; no one knows just who, but this isn't like a normal adult place where everybody coolly pretends a fart didn't happen. Here everybody has to make their little comment.

TIME is passing. Ennet House reeks of passing time. It is the humidity of early sobriety, hanging and palpable. You can hear ticking in clockless rooms here. Gately changes the angle of one sneaker, puts his other arm behind his head. His head has real weight and pressure. Randy Lenz's obsessive compulsions include the need to be north, a fear of disks, a tendency to take his own pulse, a pathological fear of every form of timepiece, and a constant need to know the time with great precision.

"Day man, you got the time maybe real quick?" Lenz. For the third time in half an hour. Patience, tolerance, reserve, compassion. Gately remembers his own first few straight months here: he'd felt the sharp edge of every second that went by. And the freak-show dreams. Nightmares beyond the worst D.T.s you'd ever heard of. One reason to have a night-shift Staffer down in the front office is so somebody's there for the residents to talk at when—not if, when—when the detox nightmares ratchet them out of twisted sheets at like 0300. Nightmares about relapsing and getting high, about not getting high but having everybody think you're high, about getting high with your alcoholic mom and then killing her with a baseball bat. Whipping it out for a court-ordered Urine and starting up and flames come shooting out. Getting high and bursting into flames. Having a waterspout shaped like an enormous syringe suck you up inside. A vehicle explodes in a bloom of enhanced flame on the VCR, its hood up like an old pop tab.

Day is making a broad gesture out of checking his wristwatch. "Right around eight-thirty, fella."

Randy L.'s fine nostrils flair and whiten. He stares straight ahead, eyes narrowed, fingers on his wrist. Day purses his lips. Gately hangs his head over the arm of the sofa and regards Lenz upside down. "That look on your face there mean something there, Randy? Are you like communicating something with that look?"

"Does anybody maybe know the time a little more exactly is what I'm wondering, Don, since Day doesn't."

Gately checks his own cheap digital, head still hung over the sofa's arm. "I got eight-thirty-two and fourteen, fifteen, sixteen seconds, Randy."

"Thanks a lot D.G. man."

And now Day has that same flared narrow look for Lenz. "We've been over this, friend. Amigo. Sport. You do this all the time with me. Again I'll say it—I don't have a digital watch. This is a fine old antique watch. It points. A memento of vastly better days. It's not a digital watch. It's not a cesium-based atomic clock. It points, with hands. See, Spiro Agnew here has two little arms: they point, they suggest. It's not a fucking stopwatch for life. Lenz, get a watch. Am I right? Why don't you just get a watch, Lenz. Three people I happen to know of for a fact have offered to get you a watch and let you pay them back whenever you feel comfortable about poking your nose out and investigating the work-a-world. Get a watch. Obtain a watch. A fine, digital, incredibly *wide* watch, about five times the width of your wrist, so you have to hold it like a falconer, and it treats time like pi."

"Easy does it," Charlotte Treat half sings, not looking up from her needle and frame.

Day looks around at her. "I don't believe I was speaking to you in any way shape or form."

"Peace," Gately says softly, his head still hanging over. Joe Smith, upside-down, is having another coughing fit over in the dining room.

Lenz is staring blackly at Geoffrey Day. "If you're trying to fuck with me, brother." He shakes his fine shiny head. "Big mistake."

Day puts his hands up to his cheeks. "Ooh I'm all atremble. I can barely hold my arm steady to read my watch."

Lenz points his cigarette. "Big big big *real* big mistake."

Emil M.'s contorted way forward in his chair in the way of somebody communicating that he's trying to watch TV around a distraction. "Hows about I give you both a beating if you don't shut up."

A time-killing fantasy Gately has lately is in the middle of bullshit squabbles like this he all of a sudden picks Geoffrey D. up bodily and swings him by his dress shoes and uses him as a bludgeon to beat Randy Lenz's overgroomed head in, freeing up two bunks at once. His progress consists of just entertaining such thoughts now instead of acting on them, which Pat M. reassures him is almost the same as patience. The Ennet House living room has no clock. Gately likes that his cheap watch counts off the seconds: sometimes he just sits and watches the seconds on his big wrist tick digitally off, to remind himself that an interval of time is passing, will pass.

Day has crossed his legs and laced his hands over the knee, a posture they all know Lenz detests for some reason. "So let me get this straight. We're engaged in an argument about whether it's appropriate for you continually to harass innocent watch wearers for the exact time in lieu of buying your own watch, and you win the argument by claiming that my argument is an attempt to quote *fuck* with you, and by threatening me with physical harm if I don't acquiesce to your argument. This, to you, is winning."

Lenz says, "I ain't got time for this shit."

Charlotte Treat slaps at her needlepoint frame to indicate she's exasperated. "He didn't *threaten* you."

Emil Minty suddenly stands, making the ashtray topple. "I'm fucking serious."

Gately twists on the couch to catch Minty's eye. Past Minty, down at the dining-room table's end, Joe S. is still coughing, still hunched over, his face a dusky purple; and Nell Gunther is behind him pounding him on the back so hard that it keeps sending him forward over his ashtray, and he waves one stump vaguely over his shoulder to signal her to quit. Gately locks eyes with Minty until the kid sits back down, running a hand over his Mohawk and wearily asking when he can get the fuck out of here.

"I'm just trying to get clear on what's being said here," Day is saying.

Only a couple months ago Gately would have stood up and stood over Minty and physically intimidated him to get him to sit down. Charlotte T. is trying to catch Gately's eye as Lenz sits there joggling and telling Day all he's saying is Day better hope to Christ he doesn't make Lenz have to get up out of this chair right here. Minty is making no move to start cleaning up the ashtray's mess. Gately has no idea where he'll live or what he'll do when his term as Live-In Staff is over.

Day joggles his own foot and asks Gately for his feedback on what's transpiring here, whether Staff can confirm hearing a, how shall we say, he says, *menacing* aspect to Lenz's tone and/or content. Joe Smith's coughs have taken on your serious cougher's deep slow searching aspect, like he's trying to pronounce something.

"Easy *Does* It!" shrieks Treat, holding out her absurdly tiny needle, brandishing it.

"Peace on earth good will toward men," says Gately, back all the way on his back, smiling up at the cracked dun ceiling, not even a hint of a tic to betray anything but a tolerant willingness to let it all pass, for the moment. To work itself out, seek its own level, settle, blow over. Die of neglect. He's pretty sure he knows who farted. ♦

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BOOKS

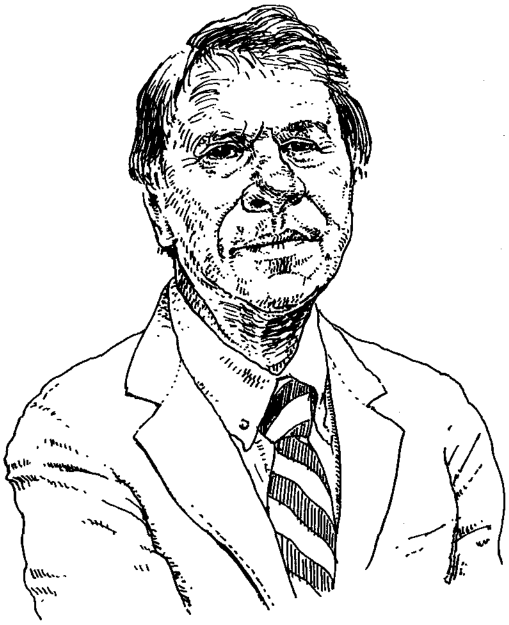
TWO CHEERS FOR ÉLITISM

Is it still necessary to choose between the masses and the classes?

BY RICHARD RORTY

"MEN are free when they belong to a living, organic, believing community, active in fulfilling some unfulfilled, perhaps unrealized purpose," D. H. Lawrence once wrote. It's a sentiment with which Christopher Lasch, one of the most influential scholars of American culture and society in the postwar era, fervently agreed. Lasch, who died last year, at sixty-one, thought that the United States of America had once been such a community, but that we had degenerated into a nation of individualists—not rugged individualists but soft, fretful, greedy ones. And the essays collected in "The Revolt of the Élites and the Betrayal of Democracy" (Norton; $22) are both a lament for what America might have been and a scathing indictment of the élites he held responsible for its current situation.

Lasch was an immensely learned historian who raised a lot of good questions about mainstream American liberalism. As a result, he has often been identified with the so-called communitarians—the influential group of writers on political and social issues which includes Amitai Etzioni (who has conducted a "communitarian teach-in" with Al Gore) and William Galston (who is currently a domestic-policy adviser to Bill Clinton). Communitarians like to remind us that we have responsibilities as well as rights. They think, and Lasch agrees, that liberalism starts from a false idea about human beings: that they are bundles of needs and rights, and that communities exist merely to insure the fulfillment of those needs and to safeguard those rights. But in the new book Lasch—who always showed a Thoreau-like unwillingness to belong to anybody else's gang—walks away from the communitarians. He contrasts their ethic of compassion with his own "populist" ethic of mutual respect. What bothers him is the disrespect with which he thinks both the liberals and the communitarians treat the masses. The communitarians, in his eyes, are one more condescending élite, ministering from above to the only decent people remaining—the working class. And he distrusts the communitarians' willingness to settle, even temporarily, for a technocratically administered welfare state. Lasch will settle for nothing short of a full-fledged participatory democracy, and the élites be damned.



The late Christopher Lasch: A Thoreau-like unwillingness to belong to anybody else's gang.

JARRETT HUDDLESTON

"Participatory democracy" was a sixties watchword, the American version of the Marxist idea that a liberated proletariat could handle things on its own while the state—along with its bureaucracy and élites—withered away. It must have seemed a good idea at the time. But the truth is that nobody has any idea how to handle a constantly changing technology, and a global economy, without leaving a lot of decisions to the experts. Marxists said that after the revolution things like money, investment capital, interest rates, and tariff agreements would dry up and blow away. Nobody now believes a word of this. Are élites really the problem? The picture of a quarter of a billion citizens developing policies on interest rates, tariffs, and health care in an electronic town meeting is even scarier than the prospect of continued governance by technocrats.

Lasch never filled in any of the details of his projected participatory democracy. Nor did he make any concrete political proposals. Had he done either, the nostalgic romanticism in which he specialized would have seemed beside the point. So would his insouciant use of "élitism," the emptiest of the surviving sixties epithets. That epithet simply ignores the success of élites in widening human freedom—defying mass opinion by fighting against capital punishment, against racial hatred, and in favor of religious tolerance. There are worse things than liberal condescension, and one of them is the self-righteous fury to which demagogues like Pat Robertson, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, and Louis Farrakhan can still move the masses.

By siding with the masses against any and every élite, even liberal ones, Lasch paints himself into a corner. As he notes, the masses' "political instincts are demonstrably more conservative than those of their self-appointed spokesmen and would-be liberators. It is the working and lower-middle classes, after all, that favor limits on abortion, cling to the two-parent family . . . resist experiments with 'alternative lifestyles,' and harbor deep reservations about affirmative action." Of course, you might think this shows that even if the élites have gotten pretty snotty, the working and lower-middle classes are no prize either. But Lasch insists that the rough justice of the workers is always, come what may, preferable to the condescending compassion of the bureaucrats, the professors, and the upper-middle-class do-gooders. Lasch would have despised the cynical greedheads for whom the working and lower-middle classes recently voted. Yet the people whose honesty, courage, and moral firmness he celebrates are the same people who believe everything Rush Limbaugh tells them, and who were shocked by Oliver North's defeat rather than by his candidacy. Nowhere in his book is there an attempt to resolve this contradiction.

LASCH was better at regretting loss than at balancing losses and gains, and he was better at imagining disaster than at suggesting ways out. His 1979 best-seller, "The Culture of Narcissism," correctly predicted that the country was heading into a binge of consumption and self-deception; in fact, many of the warnings it issued were prescient. The problem was with the book's guiding contrast—between our impoverished present and our nobler past. Reading it, you would never have guessed that in the previous quarter century the United States had raised itself, morally speaking, by its own bootstraps—that the civil-rights movement had changed our folkways to an extent nobody had thought possible. By the end of the sixties, America had made itself into a less self-righteous, more self-aware, and more just country. But Lasch's disgust with the self-indulgence of sixties radicalism prevented him from conceding that the civil-rights movement could not have happened in a country whose citizens were as incapable of fellow-feeling and reciprocal respect as he supposed. Nor is it a recommendation that he could think of no better way to end "The Culture of Narcissism" than by urging "a struggle against capitalism itself," and by calling for a revival of the work ethic, in the form of the "discipline indispensable to the task of building a new order." He echoed the notes of nostalgia and of contempt for modern decadence which ran through "The Communist Manifesto," but he told us much less than Marx and Engels had about what sort of new order we were supposed to work for.

Published twelve years later, his big, passionate, turbulent, inchoate book "The True and Only Heaven" contrasted narcissistic "liberals"—hooked on consumer goods, therapies, and self-esteem—with morally committed, great-souled, self-denying "populists." Both were pretty much creatures of Lasch's powerful dramatic imagination. Neither the politicians who urge the reforms we call "liberal" nor the voters who choose them much resemble the mushy-minded, self-deceptive individualists whom Lasch scorned. Reading the book, you'd have a hard time figuring out what the contemporary counter-parts of the heroic nineteenth-century populists whom Lasch admired are supposed to look like. For that matter, Lasch never explained how the pre-Civil War America that had bred those heroes might be re-created in the twenty-first century. These were the failings of someone who found grandly sweeping indictments of modernity more appealing than the dilemmas of ordinary politics.

THE title of "The Revolt of the Élites and the Betrayal of Democracy" recalls both José Ortega y Gasset's "The Revolt of the Masses" and Julien Benda's "The Treason of the Intellectuals." Neither recollection is encouraging. The genre to which all three books belong is long on philosophy and short on political advice. Such books typically give us diagnoses without suggestions for cure—despair without counsel. As soon as the sociocultural crisis they warn us against gets superseded by a new, bigger and better crisis, they begin to sound merely querulous. They purport to be about the fate of civilizations but typically boil down to attacks on the author's fellow-intellectuals. Like Benda, Lasch spends a lot of time denouncing the folly of those who fail to grasp our spiritual plight.

People start writing books about spiritual plight only when they have pretty much given up on politics—when they can no longer figure out what concrete practical measures might help. Then they say that only moral regeneration, or a return to religion, or a revolution in philosophy can do any good. Drifting off into an intellectual version of New Age rhetoric, they insist that nothing will be changed unless everything is changed, that the ills of the body politic can be cured only by treating our cultural soul. This rhetoric exalts the intellectuals over the politicians, the academy over the legislature, large ideas over small, practical reforms. It's the sort of thing that Europeans influenced by Nietzsche, such as the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, have been producing in quantity for most of this century. Heidegger, after becoming

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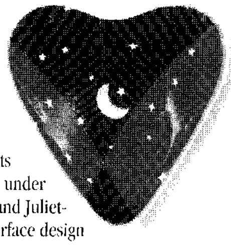

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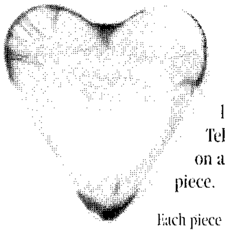

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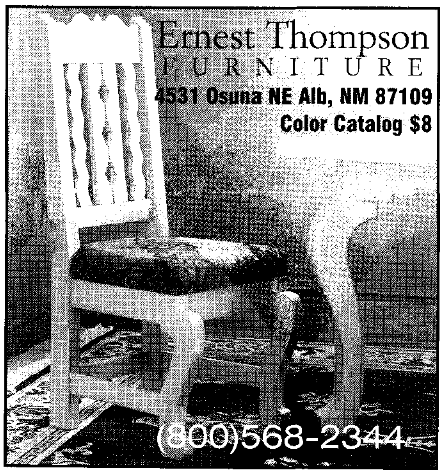

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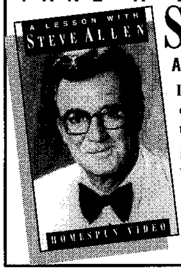

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disgusted with the Nazism he had initially embraced, decided that politics had become pointless. He announced that the pursuit of happiness and the hope of expanding democratic freedoms—as well as everything else associated with America, a country Heidegger despised—were symptoms of a fall from spiritual greatness.

Lasch was no Heideggerian, and was too much of a pragmatic American to take Nietzsche—or philosophy, for that matter—as seriously as most European writers do. But he was almost as unwilling as Heidegger and his disciples to get down to cases. When people with whom Lasch might have formed fruitful alliances offered specific political proposals, he slapped them down. For example, the most important instance of Lasch's "revolt of the élites" is made vivid and concrete in Robert Reich's account of the secession of the successful, the widening split between suburban "symbolic analysts"—white-collar folks who deal with words or numbers for a living—and the rest of the country. Since Reich became Secretary of Labor, he has come up with a lot of specific, plausible suggestions for helping to deal with the globalization of the labor market, and for helping prevent what Lasch calls "the intensification of social divisions." Yet for Lasch Reich is just a "starstruck Rhodes scholar." Lasch writes, "Only in a world in which words and images bear less and less resemblance to the things they appear to describe would it be possible for a man like Reich to refer to himself, without irony, as Secretary of Labor." But all Reich did to merit this scorn was admit that nobody could figure out how to revitalize the Rust Belt, and then—more important—go on to suggest some alternative projects. When Reich says that it may be impossible for Americans to hold on to any significant number of blue-collar jobs, given the competition from the Third World, Lasch charges him with having contempt for blue-collar workers. For Lasch, labor means "productive labor"; symbolic analysts do not count.

When intellectuals give up on day-to-day politics, they often claim, as Lasch does, that "the old dispute between left and right has exhausted its capacity to clarify issues." This cliché functions, in Lasch's book as elsewhere, as an excuse for focussing on timeless ideals instead of on what's actually happening. But the clash between left and right has very real content. Consider those Republican plans to dismantle "big government," which amount to getting rid of the parts of government that serve the lower-middle class and the underclass while keeping the parts that serve the rich. For better or worse, the liberal élites that Lasch condemns are the ones trying to resist this trend. Lasch's contempt for ordinary Democrat-versus-Republican politics made for splendid jeremiads, but where real-world politics is concerned it isn't, as we said in the sixties, relevant.

On the other hand, splendid jeremiads can sometimes do a nation a lot of good. Lasch greatly loved the United States, and his anger over what it has done to itself is often moving. When Lasch eases up on the contempt and stops trying to annihilate the competition, his writing ceases to be querulous and can sometimes be genuinely powerful. His moving tribute to the sociologist Philip Rieff and the spare, chiselled essay that concludes this volume, "The Soul of Man Under Secularism," show him at his best. In that concluding essay, he sums up the strengths and weaknesses of Oscar Wilde's attempt to make an individual human life into a work of art—the attempt that Wilde tried to universalize in his "The Soul of Man Under Socialism." Wilde thought the only point of socialism, or of democracy, was to give everybody the chance to lead the kind of self-creative, daring, imaginative life that Wilde himself led—the chance to invent a new, idiosyncratic form of happiness. But Lasch is, in these last writings, almost as dubious about the pursuit of happiness as Heidegger was. At the end of the essay on Wilde, Lasch commends to us "a God who does not regard human happiness as the be-all and end-all of creation." "The central paradox of religious faith," he tells us, is that "the secret of happiness lies in renouncing the right to be happy." When you read that sentence, his earlier displays of exasperation, impatience, and contempt suddenly fall into place. You realize that Lasch's vision of America ultimately came to have more in common with Jonathan Edwards' than with Jefferson's, Emerson's, or Whitman's.

Whitman said that "the United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem," a statement that Wilde would have applauded and that is still the motto of all-American romantics like Harold Bloom and Gore Vidal. For them, reasonably democratic government and the self-fuelling creative ecstasy that Bloom calls "the American religion" are sufficient goals. But these were not, in the end, enough for Lasch. The last paragraphs of his book include sentences that Heidegger could have written:

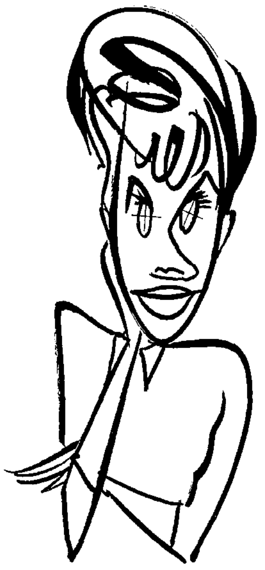
> If the whole world now seems to be going through a dark night of the soul, it is because the normal rebellion against dependence appears to be sanctioned by our scientific control over nature, the same progress of science that has allegedly destroyed religious superstition.
>
> Those wonderful machines that science has enabled us to construct have not eliminated drudgery, as Oscar Wilde and other false prophets so confidently predicted, but they have made it possible to imagine ourselves as masters of our fate. In an age that fancies itself as disillusioned, this is the one illusion—the illusion of mastery—that remains as tenacious as ever.

If you believe *that*, of course, you may well be content to offer, as Heidegger did, despair without counsel. But if, like Freud, you think nothing could be more illusory than the promise of supernatural redemption through the renunciation of happiness, you may persist in believing that a merely material and secular goal suffices: mortal life as it might be lived on the sunlit uplands of global democracy and abundance. You may see contemporary human beings not as enfolded in a fated spiritual darkness but as still trying to master fate, still bravely stumbling through the seemingly endless minefields that separate them from those glimpsed uplands. ♦

DÉJÀ VIEW

Familiarity doesn't breed contempt in "A Private View."

BY HERMIONE LEE



Anita Brookner

EVERY year for the last fourteen years, the distinctive Brookner perennial has reappeared in the mixed herbaceous border of the English novel, looking formal, old-fashioned, faintly Continental. Pale and elegant at first glance, it seems darker, almost grotesque, on closer inspection. It is greeted with habitual critical reactions, ranging from settled adulation ("vintage Brookner"; "a class of her own") to impatience or unease. Devotees praise her irony, her sadness, and her beautiful prose; dissenters long for more talk, more action, more vulgarity, and more sex. Those in the middle (like me), who are both addicted to and dismayed by these compulsive, straitjacketed novels, feel a resigned admiration in the face of a great stylist who does one kind of thing supremely well.

Brookner herself anticipated all these responses in her second novel, "Providence," in an exchange between her heroine and a professor of art: " 'I like your drawing. But why do you always do the same one?' 'Ah, that is called stylistic mastery.' " She must know that her novels invite recognition rather than surprise. They often have titles that suggest limitations: "Latecomers," "Brief Lives," "A Closed Eye," and now "A Private View" (Random House; $23). They frequently begin with solitary figures unhappily considering their lives. "A Misalliance" begins, "Blanche Vernon occupied her time most usefully in keeping feelings at bay."

These patients in Brookner's fictional hospital are suffering from some form of repression, or what in "Latecomers" is called "the panic of the shutting of the door." They feel displaced—as in "Brief Lives," "forcibly put down in alien territory." (Two of her best novels, "Fam-

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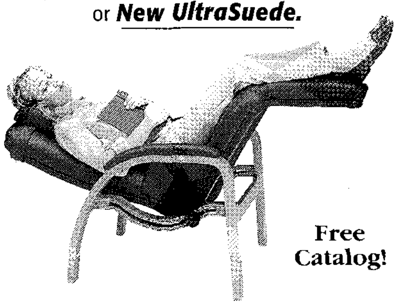

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There is a logic in the sea
that fishes understand,
a pattern that rests in the spine, a gloved assent
revealed by the sweep and turn
of the changing tide,

and air is a river of language,
skylarks and barn owls
calling and spinning aside,
a blue domain of semaphore and noise
drifting through rain,
leached through our faint receivers. From the first,

our element was stone:
it lay beneath us like a darker form
of gravity, a drift we could not mine,
the local shifts and flickers in the rock,
stitches and hair streaks no one could read or interpret,

and we were its echoes, rendered for the light,
moving, being, wreathed in love and fear,
that stillness at the center of our house
a shape the wind revealed by purest chance
then covered, like the secret veins and seams
that harden in the bloodlines of our children.

—John Burnside

ily and Friends" and "Latecomers," concern families, like Brookner's own, of European Jewish immigrants in England.) They are often grieving for lost parents. Their usual setting is a flat, with central heating, in a dark, gray London. There are walks through empty streets at dusk. There is often a public holiday impending, and dreaded. There may be an escapade to the Continent, but that won't necessarily relieve these life sentences of solitude.

An ethical debate continues from novel to novel—a set-to between the good taste of melancholy and the vulgarity of happiness, between a stoic fatalism and a modern idea of lives as infinitely transformable. Brookner's formidably dandyish satire has always exercised itself rewardingly on "options" and consolations. ("Blessings, it seemed, had once again to be counted" is the driest sentence in "A Private View.") Transformations do occur, but more often the possibilities of change or escape are missed. The narration, with its lack of dialogue and its deliberate repetitions, reflects this airlessness uncannily.

With every new Brookner, I find myself looking for what I think of as her key word (a word not otherwise much in use in late-twentieth-century British fiction), which is "claustration." Sure enough, it's here in "A Private View," on page 192, sounding more than ever like an echo of "castration." The central character, George Bland, "wondered if he could ever bear to endure his habitual claustration again." His life has been a "refusal of adventure"; his surroundings are muted ("the lighting was adequate, although subdued"); he increasingly feels that "something was amiss." In all these respects, his experience resembles the reader's.

Bland is a well-preserved sixty-five-year-old businessman (retired after forty years in the same job) who has inherited a small fortune from his only friend. He has a tepid long-term relationship with a placid widow, whom he has failed to marry. Behind this "desperately calm

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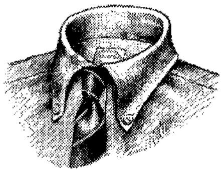
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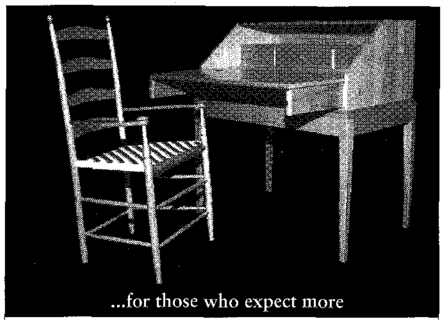
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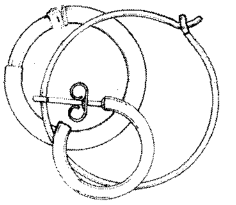
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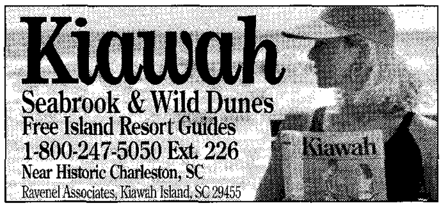
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and comfortable life" lies a sad childhood. Bland was a poor boy from Reading with "disorderly" parents—feckless father, embittered, possessive mother. His escape into the middle classes (Brookner is an intensely class-conscious novelist) and his attempt to cancel out his past have resulted in a permanent sense of shame. Like James's Lambert Strether ("Live all you can; it's a mistake not to"), he is looking for a way out of what he's made for himself: he longs for more life.

The longing is immense, the scale is tiny. Apart from the dead friend, the patient widow, some neighbors, a porter, and a cleaning woman, there is one *dea ex machina.* This intruder, Katy Gibb, is one of Brookner's dangerous predators: nomadic, evasive, casual, dubious. George always thinks of her as "the girl," but she seems to be older than she looks. Her shadowy business is human improvability ("Tell the world how great you are!"), and her language is transatlantic: sure signs of moral inadequacy. She offers her clients Tantric Massage, Crystal Therapy, Color Counselling. Bland imagines "a playground filled with adults in leisure wear, all self-actualizing obediently until the end of the session." He shares his author's distaste for all forms of evangelism.

Nevertheless, George Bland becomes obsessed by Katy Gibb, and the novel takes on that anxious, imprisoned feeling essential to all stories of improbable erotic fixation. He is both ashamed of and aroused by the Dionysian last gasp of his hitherto repressed libido: he reflects with embarrassment on his "irrelevant penis." ("An Irrelevant Penis"—the title of Anita Brookner's nineteenth novel, perhaps.) There's something seedy and sadomasochistic about his desire. Violence is latent, if not against "the girl," then against himself. His orderly patterns begin to break apart.

On the novel's last page, Brookner offers Bland an escape from repression that allows for the possibility of self-help rather than self-destruction. But fairy-tale transformation is not what the novel as a whole seems to believe in. Brookner's poetry of forlornness is stronger and stranger here than ever. Brightness falls from the air everywhere in this novel, which takes place in a cold winter half-light and keeps crying out for "the sun, the sun!" ♦

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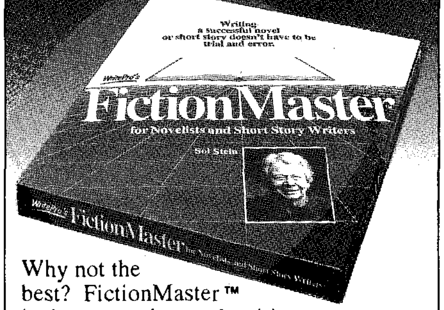
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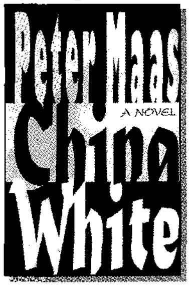

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Salvation on Sand Mountain
by Dennis Covington
(Addison-Wesley; $20)

In Scottsboro, Alabama, members of the Church of Jesus with Signs Following pray together, sing hymns, and convene at socials over bowls of Ambrosia. They also speak in tongues, drink strychnine from fruit jars, and wipe their brows with rattlesnakes. Covington was dispatched by the *Times* to cover the 1992 trial of their preacher, who forced his wife to stick her hand into a snake cage. This is an extraordinary account of how a journalistic assignment evolved into a spiritual quest, as Covington—Brother Dennis—is drawn inside the handlers' world, eventually "taking up serpents" himself.

Entertaining Angels
by Marita van der Vyver; translated from the Afrikaans by Catherine Knox
(Dutton; $20.95)

When Griet Swart decides to kill herself by way of a gas oven, she finds a cockroach inside and panics, knocking herself nearly unconscious: "I spent the rest of the evening cleaning the oven." Unable not to be funny, despite two miscarriages, a stillbirth, and an impending, unsought divorce, Griet molds her misfortunes into the contemporary genre of the self-discovery novel. Along the way, we get a taste of liberal, literary Boer society—something one might have thought to be an oxymoron—and, for those who've encountered romantic travails, the kind of good company that misery loves.

The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s
by Eugen Weber (Norton; $25)

A searching, disturbing history of "a low dishonest decade" that ended with France's rout in a war that it didn't want and fought incompetently. The memory of the First World War and the panic created by pacifist propaganda between the wars made their contributions, but, as Weber ably demonstrates, the recipe for disaster was more complicated. It included a retrograde economy and a nation united only by distrust of its government and contempt for its institutions.

Voices Over Water
by D. Nurkse (Graywolf; $10)

These poems, which tell the story of an Estonian couple who emigrate to Canada in the early part of this century, work both as discrete, individually imagined lyrics and also as chapters in an ongoing narrative of genuinely engaging lives. There are no sagging makeshifts here. A high proportion of the poems are gems of gravid simplicity, and Nurkse's rhetorical periods can be breathtaking: "We've hoarded our delights / like pennies in a sock / and they're heavy: our children / cry from dreams not hunger."

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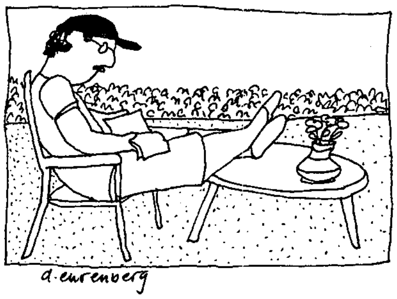

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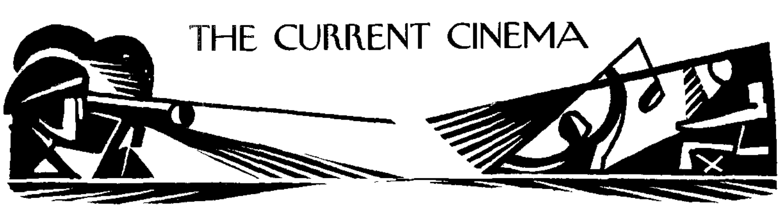


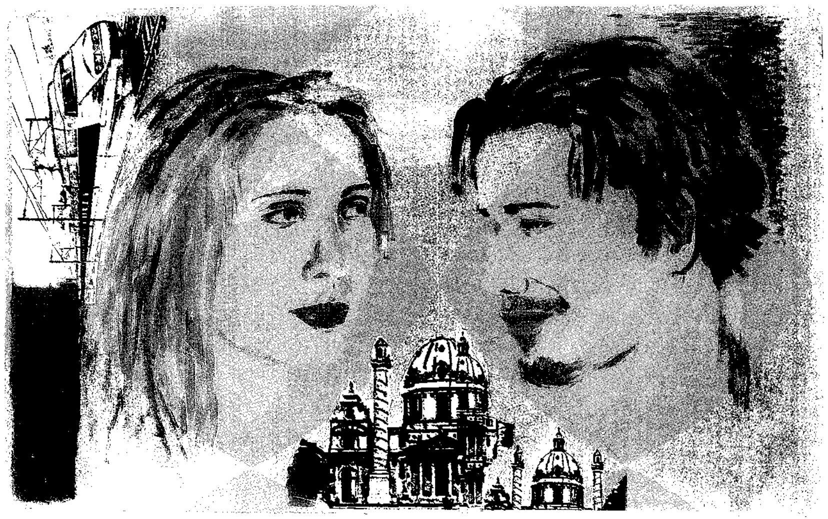
THE CURRENT CINEMA

UP ALL NIGHT

"Slacker" meets Vienna in Richard Linklater's new film.

BY ANTHONY LANE

"BEFORE SUNRISE" starts with strangers on a train. One is Jesse (Ethan Hawke), a young American kicking around the Continent on a Eurailpass; the other is Céline (Julie Delpy), a French student making her way back to Paris. They start talking as the train hums toward Vienna, where Jesse is due to disembark—a foolish, not to say tragic, plan, since it involves never seeing Céline again. True, he has only just met her, but already he has spotted her copy of Georges Bataille, and if there is one rule that governs the life of the seasoned traveller it is: Once you find a French blonde reading Georges Bataille of her own free will, don't let her out of your sight. Hang in there like a limpet. But how can Jesse work it? What should he do before the lady vanishes? He does the right thing, of course: he proposes that they get off the train together, mosey around Vienna all night, then continue their respective journeys in the morning. This fine suggestion flatters Céline by assuming that she is as footloose and wacky as Jesse is; more important, it beckons the audience into a similar state of mind. The fact is that most of us would never have struck up the conversation in the first place, for fear of being arrested by the conductor and stashed in the freight car; but the director, Richard Linklater, is so adept at building up a mood of shrugging, petty-picaresque adventure that we kid ourselves that Jesse is doing the obvious thing, that cool comes naturally to all.



Julie Delpy and Ethan Hawke: Hanging out is pretty much the same wherever you go.

So he and Céline dump their bags at the station and set off into the unknown—the deep unknown, if you go by the standard of Linklater's earlier pictures, "Slacker" and "Dazed and Confused." Both were set in Texas, which seems a long way from the Ringstrasse, but so swiftly did they establish what it was to be a Linklater character—flexible, late-rising, eagerly bemused, struck rather than tortured by doubt, extremely unlikely to wear a suit—that it comes as no surprise when his new heroes, dropped into foreign territory, are able to pick themselves up and get strolling without a qualm. Against the odds, Vienna turns out to be ideal for Linklater's purposes; he could have

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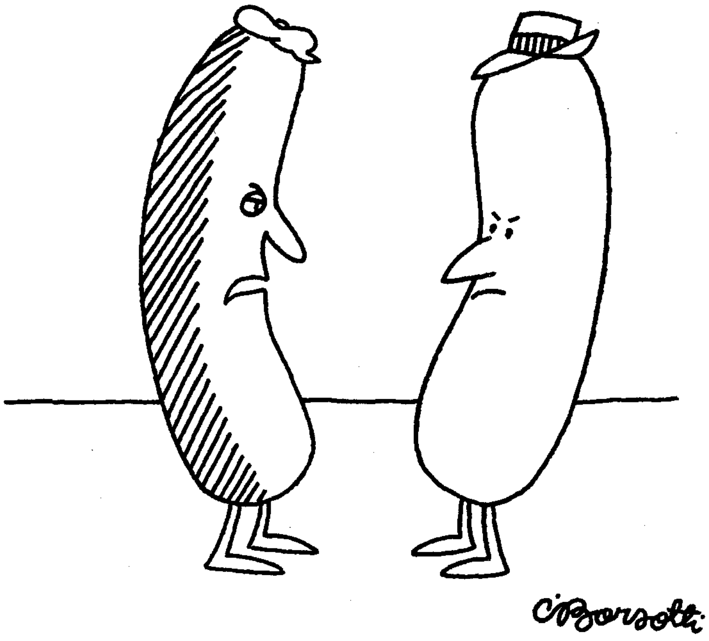


"They grilled me, Eddie, but I didn't talk."

called the movie "Schlacker." A more fashionable, closely packed city, like Prague, would not have given him the physical leeway he needs for his peculiar brand of near-aimlessness. He can let his characters loose across broad streets and patches of park, or keep the camera running on them as they talk away a long, dawdling trip in the back of a tram. The really smart thing about this style is the way it fends off cheap temptations. The very mention of Europe—or, worse, of Middle Europe—sends some directors into an Expressionist jag (see Woody Allen's "Shadows and Fog," or Steven Soderbergh's "Kafka"), the implication being that everybody living east of Munich is personally related to Dr. Caligari. How much more tolerant, and closer to the spirit of Renoir, is Linklater's suspicion that the knack of hanging out is pretty much the same wherever you go, and that it is best practiced not among angular shadows but in the calm light of day. In a neat riposte to "The Third Man," he puts Céline and Jesse in one of the pods of a Ferris wheel, high above the city; it was here that Harry Lime looked down on the insect swarm of citizens, and spoke so witheringly of cuckoo clocks. It remains the most stirring hymn to misanthropy in all cinema, and Linklater answers in the only way he can, by hitting us with the movie's first kiss.

This has been a long time coming; but then the romantic rhythm of the picture goes through some fairly unusual variations. Think of the erotic clockwork that drives most Hollywood love stories: the initial meeting, maybe a couple more, then into the slushy kiss, the quick cut to discarded socks and stockings lying on a bedroom floor, the camera travelling up to survey either the post-coital hug or the mid-coital yelp. Now try the Linklater version: the long talk on a train, more talk in the city, another helping of talk, then a wonderful scene in the cramped listening booth of a record store, where both parties are aching to embrace but can't quite dredge up the courage, contenting themselves with looking terribly serious and swallowing hard, like fliers trying to adjust to high altitude—which, in a sense, is what they are. Still no kiss. Finally, it happens, up in the Ferris wheel, followed by *more talk*. Unbelievable, really, although only in terms of film formulas; in terms of human behavior, I believed every minute of it. "I think I decided to sleep with you when we got off the train," Céline says. "Now that we've talked so much, I'm not sure anymore." When did you last hear such an honest jumble of head and heart? Later, out on the grass, armed with a bottle of wine and stolen glasses, they do make love, but it doesn't strike you as a fortissimo conclusion to their tale—it's more like taking the next step, hitting the right note.

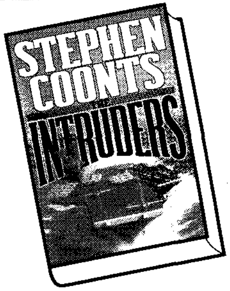
It should be clear by now that "Before Sunrise" is a very odd movie. It disobeys all kinds of rules; it consists mostly of two people wandering around getting to know each other, which sounds very close to boring; and the other figures who turn up—geeky actors, a poet, a belly dancer, even a fortune-teller—are borderline bohemian, which sounds very close to embarrassing. But Linklater, together with his co-writer, Kim Krizan, seems to relish these risks, and he never tries to conceal the fact that Jesse and Céline (particularly Céline) are at an age when it is de rigueur to spout equal quantities of bullshit and good sense. You prepare to wince, but the essential good humor of the movie gets there just in time. What's more, the performers are both so high on it, so tuned in to Linklater's requirements, that you can scarcely begrudge them an occasional flash of loopiness.

That open, unsmoothed feel of the piece—it comes across as improvised, but I imagine that every rough patch was planned and choreographed in advance—pushes both stars into the strongest work of their careers. "Before Sunrise" finally exorcises the ghost of "The Dead Poets Society," a smug and pernicious movie that burdened Ethan Hawke with more angst than any young actor deserves. Something had to bring him down from that high, mournful sensitivity, and back from the grunge pose of "Reality Bites." Jesse is just the role, and, like the movie itself, Hawke takes care to annoy us from time to time, insuring that we don't gag on undiluted charm. Then, there is the matter of Julie Delpy, a stern reminder that the first duty of a film critic—the sole qualification, to be honest—is to fall regularly, and pointlessly, in love with the people onscreen. Once this stops happening, you might as well give up and get a proper job. I was trying to work out why 1994 had been such a lousy year for cinema, and suddenly realized that it was at least six months before anyone made me spill my Sprite. Well, this year looks much more promising, because it's only January and my heart already belongs to another. Delpy did appear in boring old 1994, in "White" and "Killing Zoe," but she may not have fully registered with the audience, not least because those films were—understandably—in such awe of her pallid, thin-armed Cranach looks that, without really wanting to, they raised her to the level of an ideal. Linklater makes her scruffier and more profane; if she's the girl of your dreams, it's only because the dreams are a big joke, and she knows it. "It's like some male fantasy," she tells Jesse. "Meet some French girl on a train, fuck her, and never see her again." She even has a murky past, and she chats merrily about a recent boyfriend, and the rumor that she was going to kill him. As she mentions the police, you can see Jesse flinching, asking himself, "What am I *doing* with this person? Is this her favorite hobby—meet some American guy on a train, knife him, and make sure nobody sees him again?"

There are plenty of moments like this, when the easy, unperplexed swing of the picture trips over ridges of threat. None of them come to anything, and that's why they lurk at the side of your mind: the Vienna night feels all the fresher and more enchanted for the storm warnings that brew and veer away. Céline and Jesse visit a small cemetery dotted with the graves of unknowns: vagrants and visitors, the odd Viennese without a name—"Maybe just a first name, I don't know," Céline says. All at once, you sniff a plot: they will die tonight, somewhere in the city, stripped of their belongings—maybe even of their first names. The story will come to rest in this same graveyard, the camera welcoming a pair of new arrivals.

It doesn't happen, of course. They have a great evening, suffer no harm, and promise to do it again—to meet in a year's time, on June 16th. Jesse mentions the date in passing, and no more is said, but it can hardly be an accident: they have had a happy Bloomsday. How are you supposed to take this hint? If you think it's a flashy little name-drop, buying into Joyce for the sake of intellectual glamour, fair enough; but I think it answers another, more respectable need. The point is not that Linklater has his head in his books—he'd never let them cramp his style—but that his movie is about people with books in their heads. Hollywood is so illiterate these days that when directors grapple with literature they either molest it brutally or, worse, freeze up in its presence. Martin Scorsese's "The Age of Innocence" was lush and honorable, but you couldn't help noticing how he backed away from disturbing the sanctity of the text; his diplomacy was preserved in Joanne Woodward's voice-overs, which soothed our ears with passages of pure Wharton, as if to reassure us of the film's credentials.

Richard Linklater does the opposite: he relaxes in the presence of literature—tossing in references for fun, never trying to load them with significance. They circle around in the discursive air of the movie, the kinds of things that Jesse might or might not know, that he could have picked up in the course of his railbound reading. At one point, he quotes Auden—or, rather, he imitates Dylan Thomas declaiming Auden. It's mainly a joke for Céline's benefit, but it feels right for the dopey, unforgettable dawn that has just come up on them, and you can't help recalling that the aged Auden lived out the dregs of his life a few miles away from where they sprawl; and then you think of Auden's great lyric about staying out all night, with its homage to "the sexy airs of summer." The poem seems not only to describe the movie but, as it were, to sponsor it; what Linklater has managed to do is to pull us back into that wordy, pleasantly confused moment of youth when people have the nerve—the pretension, maybe, but also the wit—to envisage their lives as a kind of literature, to imagine themselves sauntering gaily, or grimly, through one short story after another. That is why the glance at "Ulysses" works so beautifully: it doesn't try to argue that its hero is like Stephen Dedalus, or that Vienna is Nighttown, or anything so vain—it simply tells us that just once, for a single day, Jesse and Céline have given life the sort of shape and charge that until now they have found only in fiction, and may never find again. The movie ends, as did "Dazed and Confused," early in the morning, the characters smarting with sleeplessness. Linklater is fast making this his time of day, as surely as John Cheever colonized the cocktail hour. Jesse and Céline are seen going their separate ways, smiling; and you wonder whether they dreamed, or fancied, the whole thing. Maybe they caught sight of each other on the train, began to make a move, thought better of it, and quietly went back to their books. ♦



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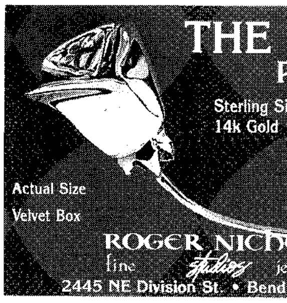

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But, like, a perfume is only a smell in the air. Must be hard to—

There is a place where nothing matters—and everything is possible. Yet when they mingle, lightning strikes. This is that. St. Elmo. That is this.

That your better half over there, waving at us?

When the filaments of desire short-circuit common sense itself, and you are immolated from the inside out, there is no salvation. But there is . . . Cuckold.

I don't see mine. Wonder where—

Give me stormy nights and waterfalls and magic and I will be more myself than I was a million nights ago. I forget everything—but I remember Amnesia. At fine stores everywhere.

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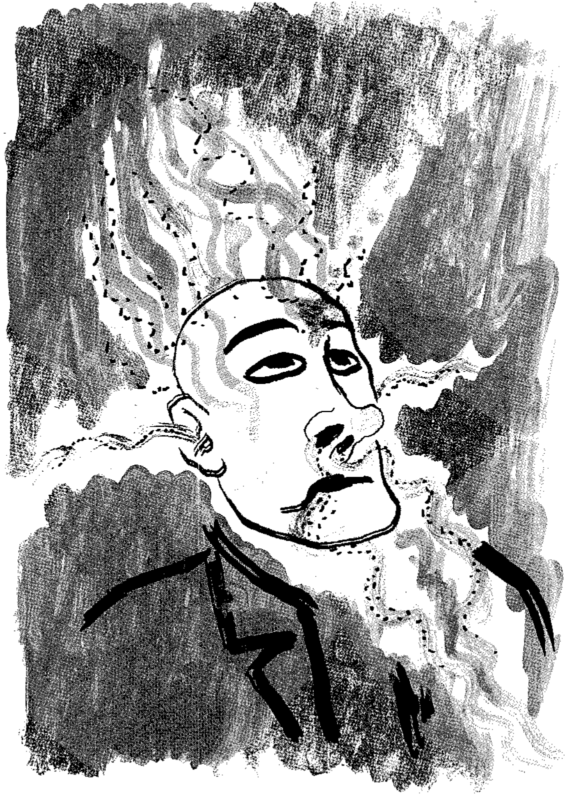

Beyond games, there is Fate. And when you embrace it and part and embrace again, you approach Eternity. And who keeps score? Goose Egg, by Flambé.

That guy Starks drives me nuts. The other night in Orlando, he—

Madness is the lock and the key and passion the explosive that frees you. Dare you? Plastique, for inmates of love.

But I mean, the guy—

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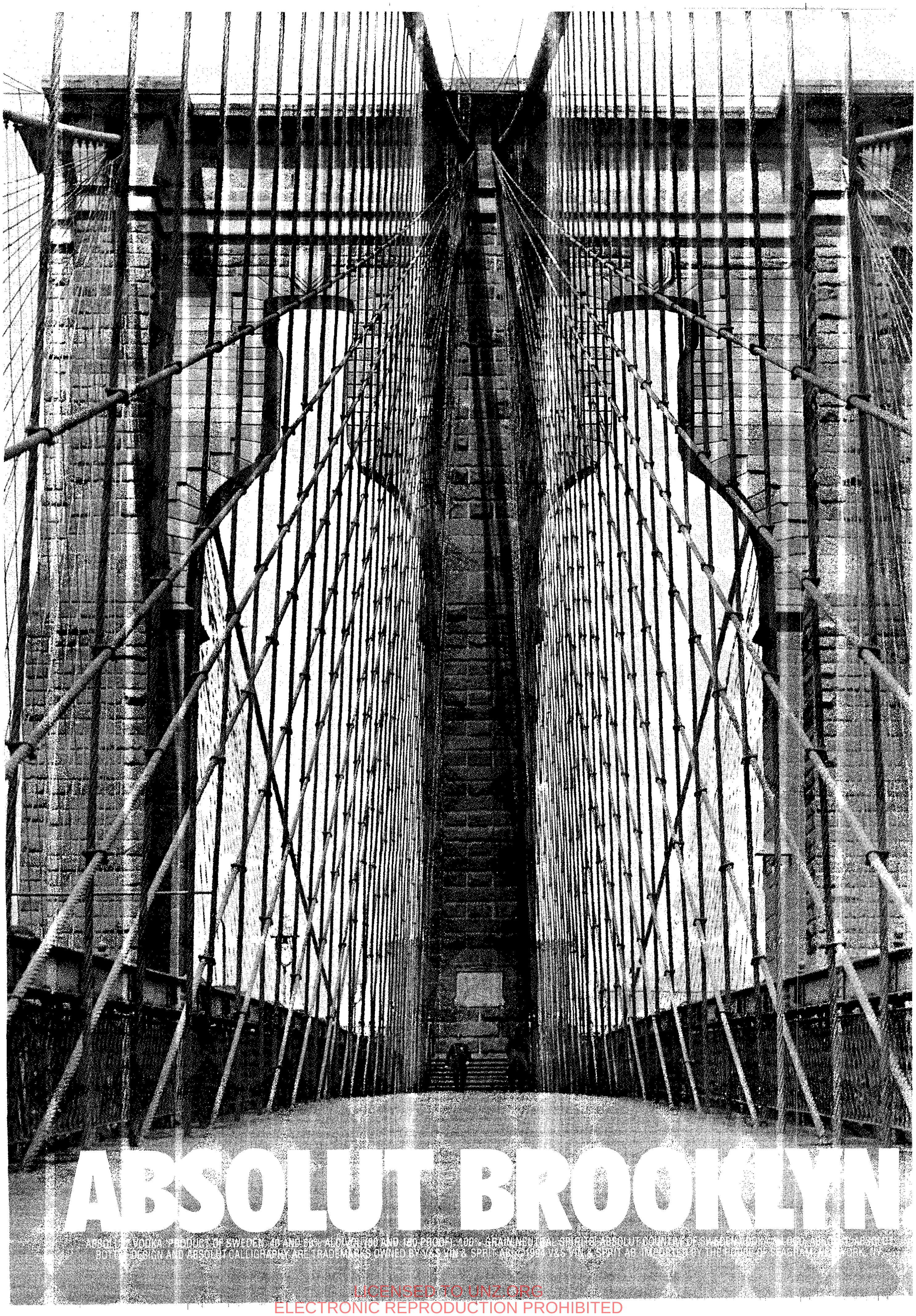

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